

DIALOGUES

O N

PERSONAL and FAMILY-RELIGION,

BETWEEN

A MINISTER and one of his PARISHIONERS.

To which are added

FORMS of PRAYER

For the FAMILY and the CLOSET.

Written by the Reverend, Learned, and Holy

Mr. *RICHARD BAXTER.*

ABRIDGED

By *BENJAMIN FAWCETT, M.A.*

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P R E F A C E,

By the Compiler of this Abridgment.

 H E R E is Reason to believe, that the following *Dialogues* were originally drawn from the Life, and not the mere Creatures of Imagination. The *Author* wrote them about the *fifty-seventh* Year of his Age, after he had been intimately acquainted with serious Religion from his Childhood, and had been the happy Instrument of forming Multitudes to the Christian Temper and Character, by a long Course of very successful Labours, not merely from the *Pulpit* and the *Press*, but in his *Pastoral Visits from House to House*. Blessed be God, there are some faithful Ministers now, as there undoubtedly have been in every Age of the Christian Church, whose Observation and Experience, in their private Converse with the Souls under their Care, have borne a near Resemblance to the instructive and familiar Representations of these *Dialogues*.

Dr. *Calamy* says of this Performance, " It was well accepted, and has been very useful ; many Thousands of them being distributed through the Nation." Such an extensive Distribution was Mr. *Baxter's* avowed Design, and therefore he prefixed

P R E F A C E.

fixed to his Book a serious and earnest Address to the *Rich*, entreating them to exercise their pious Benevolence in giving it away amongst their *poor Neighbours*. By this Means it soon passed through numerous Editions. Perhaps some of the *Affluent* in the present Day may think this *Abridgment* better subservient to their benevolent Designs, as the *whole Book* could not have been reprinted without *three or four Times* the Expence.

The same Manner of abridging is observed in this, as in several others of Mr. *Baxter's* Pieces, and is more particularly explained at the latter End of the *Compiler's Preface* to the *Abridgment* of the *Saint's Everlasting Rest*. But in drawing up the *Forms of Prayer* it was thought proper to take much greater Liberty.

If the Perusal of the *following Pages* should contribute, through a divine Blessing, to the religious Improvement of here and there a *Family*, or *Person* only, the *Compiler* will thankfully esteem it as a merciful Answer to many Prayers, and particularly of those worthy Ministers, both of the *established Church*, and amongst the *Dissenters*, whose Request was more immediately gratified in his undertaking this Work.

Kidderminster,
December 30, 1768.

B. F.



DIALOGUE I.

The Minister endeavours to fix his Parishioner's serious Attention upon the Interests of his Soul and Eternity.

M I N I S T E R.



WAS intimating, Neighbour, when I saw you last, how much I esteem myself obliged, besides preaching in public, to watch over the Individuals of my Flock, and privately to assist them in their religious Interests, to the best of my Ability, and as often as they themselves shall favourably accept of it. For this Purpose, I intreated, and you as readily promised me, now and then an Hour, when you had Leisure from other Affairs.

P A R I S H I O N E R.

Indeed, Sir, you are welcome. But easily as I granted your very reasonable Request, I must acknowledge myself by no Means fit to talk with you on Religion.

M. I assure you, I come with no other Design, but that of a kind and faithful Friend to your Soul, and to help you in the Way to eternal Life. Permit me therefore to ask, what do you think would become of you, were you this Day to enter into your eternal State?

B

P. God

P. God knows. We must all hope the best, and put our Trust in his Mercy.

M. Undoubtedly God knows; but do you think a Person may not know, with some Degree of Certainty, whether he shall be saved or not?

P. Who can tell the Secrets of God?

M. May not a Person know it, if God tells him?

P. Yes, Sir; but God tells nobody such Things.

M. Is not the Holy Scripture the Word of God? And doth not God tell us, whatever Scripture tells? When a Man dieth, doth not his Soul go, either to Heaven, or Hell? And must not the Difference be very great between those that go to inconceivable Glory, and those that go to inexpressible Misery?

P. I know he is a just God. He would not take one to Heaven, and send another to Hell, if their Characters were both alike.

M. Do you think there is so great a Difference between the Godly and the Wicked, and yet that it cannot be known, even by themselves, upon Enquiry? Cannot you know what you *love*, and what you *hate*?

P. Though a Man may know his own Mind, God only can know the Heart.

M. You have often heard of Scripture-Promises to the Godly, and Threatenings against the Ungodly; but to what Purpose are they, if no Person can discern whether the Promises or the Threatenings belong to himself?

P. Not unless he have some Guess, or Hope, that he is one of the Godly.

M. You know Scripture speaks much of *the Children of God*, and *the Children of the Devil*. The former are said to have God's *Nature* and *Image*, and to be *born of God*, and to be *made holy*, in some Measure, as *God is holy*. The latter are said to be *of the Devil*, and to be *taken captive by him at his Will*, and to *do his Works*. And can you think God and the Devil are so much alike, that their Image and Nature,

Nature, their Works and Children cannot be distinguished from each other?

P. God forbid, I should think so!

M. Scripture contains a great Variety of Expressions, to describe the Children of God, and to enable us to know whether we are such. But how can you imagine all these Descriptions are given us in Vain?

P. No Part of God's Word can be in Vain.

M. Those Descriptions are not only designed to *make the godly know*, that they are the Children, of God; but that knowing it, they may even *rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*. They are therefore commanded to *rejoice in the Lord*, and to *rejoice evermore*. This Command cannot belong to the Ungodly, but very plainly implies the Knowledge the Godly have of their own Holiness and Happiness.

P. I never thought so much of these Things before. I cannot deny them. I confess I have no such comfortable Self-Knowledge.

M. What! Have you no well-grounded Hope of your own Salvation? No distinct Knowledge of your spiritual State? Permit me freely to ask, have you set your Heart upon this grand Concern, and made it your principal Care and Labour, and left Nothing undone which you were capable of doing, in Order to make sure of everlasting Life?

P. I wish I could say so! God forgive me! I have had some random Thoughts of these Things, but never attended to them in earnest.

M. I am sorry for it. But pray tell me, what was it that hindered you?

P. Alas! Sir, I have had a Thousand Hinderances. My Heart and Time have been so filled up with the Cares and Crosses of this World, or with vain Amusements, and sensual Delights, that I have had no Leisure to think seriously of my Soul and Eternity.

M. Was this doing well and wisely? What have you now to shew of all the Pleasures that Sin afforded you ever since you were born? What real good, what inward Satisfaction is there left behind?

P. You need not ask me such a Question. The Pleasure is all gone; but I am hoping for more.

M. And how long will that endure, which you hope for? Are you sure to live another Week, or Day, or Hour? Are you not sure that an End will come, and come shortly, and irresistibly? Will Death be more safe and comfortable, or more dangerous and terrible, by remembering your sinful Pleasures? Will it comfort a dying Man, to tell him *he hath had his good Things here*, that this World hath done for him all it can do, and now he must part with it for ever?

P. I know all this. But our Eyes are apt to be dazzled with the Things of the present World.

M. Is it not the worst of Blindness, to prefer the momentary Joys of Sin, before holy and everlasting Pleasures? When Death comes, is not Time gone, for ever gone? Is it not our Business in this World to prepare for Heaven? And must we not have our Heaven or Hell for ever, as we have here made Preparation?

P. I have often heard this, but without being stirred up to serious Consideration, still hoping for longer Life.

M. But you know the longest Life must have an End. Where are all they who lived before us? What are an hundred Years when they are gone? What now is all your past Time? Did you never think of your Soul's Appearing in another World? Have you not trod on the Dust of those who lived before you in sinful Pleasures? Is such a Life better than Heaven? Is such a corruptible Body fit to be pampered with all the Care and Labour of our Lives, to the total Neglect of our Souls?

P. I remember, I was once sick, and like to die, and then I was troubled, fearing what should become of me, and resolved I would amend my Life; but, alas! when I recovered, all wore off, and I was as eager for this World as I had ever been.

M. When

M. When you confess yourself unready to die, I wonder how you can quietly lie down to sleep, lest before Morning you should awake in a miserable Eternity. How can you forget, that if you die in an unconverted State, you are lost for ever? Are you sure at Night to live till Morning, or in the Morning till Night? Dare you wilfully or negligently live a Day unprepared for Death, while there is such Uncertainty in this mortal Life?

P. You say well. But, uncertain as Life is, I thank God I am yet alive.

M. And will you presume upon the Patience of God, so as to harden your Heart, and delay your Repentance? Will God always wait your Leisure? Where are you, and what will you do, when Death comes? Have you ever seriously thought, what it is for a Soul to leave this World, and to appear in the World of Spirits, to be fixed in Heaven or Hell, according to its Preparation in this Life?

P. You trouble me, and make me afraid. But why should we begin our Fears too soon? They will come soon enough of themselves. The Fear of dying is greater Pain than Death itself.

M. What! Is dying all you look at? It is a Trifle, compared with what comes after. Death cannot be prevented, but Damnation may. Hell is not to be escaped, without Fear, and Care, and Diligence. Had you rather be condemned for ever, than be frightened to your Duty? Is Hell easier than a little necessary Fear and Care? Were you to die like a Beast, you would have Nothing to fear after Death, and in that Case your fearing before Hand would but increase your Sorrow, without doing any good. But you *must* live after Death, and you *may* live for ever in heavenly Joys; and should not such Things be thought of seriously, *while it is called, To-day?*

P. Really, Sir, I am afraid, if I should set myself to think of another World, as seriously as you talk of

it, it would make me melancholy or mad, which I know hath been the Case with some other Persons.

M. I bless God your Reason is yet continued, and therefore I make my Appeal to it. Why did God give you Reason, but to use it in preparing for Eternity? Is not that Man mad, who, having a God to serve, a Soul to save, a Heaven to obtain, and Hell to escape, leaveth all this great Work undone, only for the Sake of this World's perishing Vanities? How pitiable, to hear one, that is thus mad, pleading, that he still neglects his Soul for Fear of being mad! More pitiable this, a Thousand Times, than to hear one in *Bedlam* say, I dare not take Physick, lest it drive me to Madness! When Men have Reason for Trifles, and none for their own Salvation; when they are only wise for Earth, but cheat themselves out of all Hope of Heaven, that they may go to Hell with imaginary Ease and Honour; may God deliver us from such Reason! But pray, what is there in God and Christ, in Heaven and Holiness, that thinking of them should make a Man mad? Is not God better than your House, or Land, your Labours, or Sports? Is he not the best Friend you have in the World? Is it not universally allowed, that we ought to love God above all? And if you are not mad in loving your Friends, or Possessions, why should it make you mad to live in the Love of God? Or, why should the Hope of heavenly Joys, and frequently meditating upon them, have any Tendency to Madness? What can so effectually preserve me from being melancholy or mad, as firmly believing, and devoutly contemplating, the Promises of future Glory? If God and Heaven be not our highest Happiness, are we not even worse than Brutes? What else can cheer our Hearts under all our Afflictions and Sorrows?

P. This may be true, if a Man were sure of Heaven. But when he thinks of Hell, will not his Fears exceed his Hopes?

M. To

M. To think of Hell despairingly, may indeed drive to Madness. But this is not your Case. You may fear Hell, so as to avoid it, by flying to that Saviour, who freely offers you eternal Life. No Man shall be damned, if he is sincerely desirous to be saved from Sin and Hell.

P. But why should the Thoughts of a future State occasion such Trouble of Mind, as to make many Persons melancholy?

M. Amongst the numerous Instances of Melancholy that have come under my Observation, the far greater Part of them have arisen, either from bodily Dis temper, or some worldly Disappointment, or both united. Many of these were never distressed about their Souls and Eternity in any Degree. And though some of them were, their religious Distress seldom or ever appeared, till after their bodily Dis temper, or their worldly Sorrow, or both together, had made considerable Progress. I have indeed met with some few under Melancholy at the Beginning of their penitent Sense of Sin; but it was manifest that their Sins had been of the most enormous Kind, so that their Horrors of Conscience were greater than they were able to bear. The Hearts of such great Sinners are usually *broken with Terrors*, that Sin may ever after appear to them *exceeding sinful*, and divine Comforts peculiarly precious. But in attempting to *heal such broken Hearts*, the Want of Success, and even the Increase of melancholy Symptoms, have been too much owing to the Unskilfulness of the Instrument.

P. What you have said, convinceth me, that, under Pretence of avoiding Trouble of Mind, I must not banish the serious Thoughts of my Soul and Eternity. But indeed, Sir, I have so little thought of these Things, that I know not how to set about it, and must intreat your Help in guiding my Thoughts.

M. You have now hinted another Cause of religious Melancholy. I mean, when a Person, after long and total Neglect of his Soul, is, by the Mercy

of God, in some Measure made sensible of his Sin and Danger, presently a Multitude of new and awful Thoughts crowd in upon his Mind, and become unmanageable. He is bewildered, like a Man in an untrodden Path.—But as you desire Advice in your Perplexity, let me intreat you first to look into your Heart, and Life, and consider, whether or no your Sins are forgiven, and God reconciled to you, and what you think would become of you, if you should die this very Night?

P. I told you, that I do not know. But I hope well. For no Man must despair.

M. You ought never to despair of Conversion and Salvation; and it is as much your indispensable Duty to try whether you are converted, and if you are not, to despair of being saved without it. As for your *hoping well*, you must know, there is the false Hope of the Hypocrite, and the well-grounded Hope of the sincere Penitent. To him that repents and believes, God promises Forgiveness and Salvation, and such a one must hope for it, and God will never disappoint his Hope. But do you think God hath any where in his Word promised, that all Men shall be saved?

P. No, I dare not say so.

M. Or, do you think, that all Men shall be saved, if they hope for it?

P. No, but still there is some Comfort in hoping well.

M. But how long will deceitful Comfort last? Hath not God told us, there are some whom he will never save? You know it is said, *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish. Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. If ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die.* Now if any of these Persons shall hope to be saved, when God says, they shall not, would they do well to hope? Would it not be hoping that God will lie?

P. Is there any Harm in hoping that God will be better than his Word?

M. As

M. As a *Benefactor*, God may give more than he promiseth; but as a *righteous Governour*, he must rule according to his Laws, or else he deceives us, which he cannot possibly do.

P. But may not a King pardon an Offender?

M. I doubt you do not understand, that God at first made a perfect Law, which forbade all Sin on Pain of Death, and we all break it daily by every Sin; but God being merciful hath given us a Saviour, and by him, the Forgiveness of all Sins to those who sincerely repent and believe. If you thus repent and believe, God hath already forgiven you. But to refuse Forgiveness on God's Terms, and yet hope for it; to despise offered Mercy, and yet say, you hope for Mercy, is the highest Affront to God. It is Blasphemy, to say, that God can be actually reconciled to impenitent Sinners. Sin is the Misery of the Soul. To forgive Sin, is, to deliver the Soul from Misery. To save the Soul, is, to save it from Sin. What is Heaven, but the perfect Likeness and Love of God? And how can a Man be in a State of Salvation, if he doth not love God more than Sin?

P. I understand these Things better than I did. But I cannot relish your seeming to drive Men to Despair.

M. You greatly mistake me. I am driving you from Despair. There is no Hope of a Sinner's Salvation, as long he continueth in an unconverted State. Everlasting Despair in Hell is the Portion of all those, who die unconverted and unsanctified. Their having no more Hope, is *the Worm that dieth not*. From such Despair I am desirous to keep you. If you are out of the Way to Heaven, you must despair of ever coming thither, except you turn; not by despairing of your own Conversion and Salvation; but of your ever being saved in the Devil's Way, and therefore to seek and hope for Salvation only in God's Way. Nothing more effectually hindereth Men from

repenting and being saved, than their hoping to be saved without true Repentance. Will not every wise Man have some good Reason for his Hope? Why then should the Soul and Eternity be ventured upon a false and uncertain Hope?

P. By no Means, if we can have a better.

M. Tell me freely then, what are the Grounds and Reasons of your Hope?

P. My Hope is founded on the Mercy of God.

M. But God's Mercy saveth none in their unconverted State. The Question is, whether this Mercy will save you?

P. I hope Jesus Christ will be my Saviour.

M. Christ saves none *in* their Sins. And why do you hope for his Salvation?

P. Is he not *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World?*

M. He is all-sufficient to save, and will certainly save all that believe in him, and turn to God.

P. I believe in Christ for Salvation.

M. If you sincerely believe, you have good Reason for your Hope. But lest you should be mistaken in an Affair of such infinite Importance, be pleased to consider the Nature of saving Faith. You are not only to believe the Truths contained in the Holy Scriptures, but heartily consent to have God for your only God, and Christ for your only Saviour, and the Holy Spirit for your Sanctifier, and wholly trust in God through Christ for your Acceptance and Salvation.

P. I hope I have this Faith and Trust in God.

M. To assist you in discerning whether this be your Faith and Trust, permit me to ask you a few Questions. Are you firmly persuaded that none can be saved without Repentance and Conversion, Regeneration and Holiness, and that *if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his?* Do you take the Love of God, and his heavenly Glory, for your only Happiness, and trust in Nothing on Earth, neither Health, Wealth, or any sensual Pleasures? Is it all
your

your Desire and Expectation to have Christ teach you the whole Will of God, and forgive all your Sins, and by his Spirit enable you, not only to forsake Lust and Wantonness, Gluttony and Drunkenness, Pride and Ambition, Deceit and Covetousness, but also to mortify every sinful Desire, and bow your own Will to the Will of God, and raise you to a holy and heavenly Life?

P. This is hard; I know not what to say to it.

M. As you trust a Physician to cure you, or a Lawyer to counsel you, so you must trust God to be better to you than all the World, and to be the Law-giver and Ruler of your Life; you must trust Christ to save you from the Guilt and Defilement of Sin, and to make you holy in Heart and Conversation. If any desire to be saved from Hell, and not from Sin; from the damning, but not from the reigning Power of Sin; and to gratify their Lusts here, but have Heaven at last; this is not trusting, but abusing the Mercy of God in Christ. If any believe that God will save Sinners without Conversion and Holiness, this is believing the Devil and their own Hearts, and not God. If, while God offereth you a heavenly Kingdom, you refuse to follow Christ in Self-denial, and in every suffering for Christ's Sake; you do not trust in God, whatever you may pretend. Suppose you were sick, and only one Physician could cure you, and he offered to do it freely, if you trusted your Life to his Skill and Care, while by some he was represented as a Deceiver, and by others praised as infallible; your trusting him would shew itself, by following his Advice, taking his Medicines, and forsaking all other. On the contrary, should you say, I trust this Physician with my Life, yet never go near him, nor take his Prescriptions; would it not be Madness to expect to be cured by such a Trust?

P. I confess this helps me better to understand the Nature of Faith. I doubt many say, they trust God, and believe in Christ, but keep their Sins, and love

this World more than Heaven and Holiness. As for following Christ in suffering for his Sake, I thought, Sir, it only belonged to Times of Persecution, and God forbid that none should be saved but Martyrs.

M. But you know Christ requires all his Disciples, without Exception, to *deny themselves, and forsake all, and take up their Cross, and follow him.* If we must do this actually in Persecution, we must also do it before in Affection and Resolution. Can we die for Christ then, unless our Heart be prepared for it now? And is it not our Baptismal Covenant, to renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil? Can we ever forsake all Things for God, and Christ, and Heaven; if it is not first the Temper and Purpose of our Hearts? *He that loveth the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.*—By this Time you can form some Judgment of your Faith and Trust, whether it hath been true or false. And pray what else have you to prove that your Hope of Salvation is well-grounded?

P. I hope I repent of my Sins, and God hath promised to forgive them that repent.

M. But what is true Repentance?

P. It is to be sorry for my Sins, and to wish I had never committed them.

M. There is great Danger of mistaking the Nature of Repentance. It is the same Thing with Conversion; a thorough Change of Mind, Will and Life, from fleshly, worldly and ungodly, to spiritual, heavenly and holy, hating the Sins which we loved, and loving all the Duties to God and Man which we formerly hated. This Change becomes like a new Nature, and prevails against all the same Temptations, by which we were most easily overcome.

P. I beseech you, explain this more fully.

M. True Repentance not only changeth a Man's Opinion, but his Heart and Conversation; not only turneth him from some particular Sin, but from all Sin. The true Penitent is as much in earnest to subdue and root out every sinful Inclination, as ever he
formerly

formerly was to indulge and fulfil it. He doth not content himself with reforming more open and enormous Vices, but strives against a worldly Mind, and all inordinate Selfishness. He *seeks the Kingdom of God and the Righteousness thereof* in the *first Place*, and with all his Might, as infinitely better than this World's Happiness. He is not sorry for Sin, without forsaking it; nor To-day repenting, and To-morrow returning again to Folly; but he delights and perseveres in the Ways of Godliness, as if they were perfectly natural to him.

P. But will not God forgive him, who shall trespass seven Times in a Day, and seven Times in a Day turn again, saying, I repent?

M. If, as Christ teacheth in that Passage of Scripture, a Man wrong you often through Infirmary, and as often repent, you must forgive him. But if your Servant, Day after Day, comes to you, and says, Master, I have done no Work, but I repent, I wish I had done it; will you take this for Repentance? We may repent To-day of an angry Look, or a vain Word, and through Infirmary may commit the same To-morrow; but we cannot sincerely repent of our past ungodly Life, and presently return to it again. Consider this well, and judge yourself, whether your's be sincere Repentance.

P. Indeed, I know not what to think of myself. And therefore, Sir, as you have examined my Case, I intreat you to help me in passing a right Judgment of it. Though a Patient feeleth his Complaints, his Physician can better judge of the Nature, Cause and Danger of the Disease.

M. But as the Patient must tell what he feeleth, you will be pleased to answer me a few Questions.—Have you more seriously regarded your Soul's everlasting Welfare than all your bodily and temporal Concerns?

P. I cannot say so, though I have often thought of it.

M. —

M. — Are you verily persuaded that your Sins deserve the Wrath of God for ever?

P. I have been taught so; but my Heart never felt my Sins so great as to deserve Hell.

M. — Have you seen as much Need of Christ for your Saviour, as a condemned Malefactor hath of Pardon, and as much desired it?

P. I know we cannot be saved without Christ; but I cannot say I have had such Desire.

M. — Have you such Faith in the future Blessedness of the Saints, as to prefer Heaven before all the Treasures and Pleasures of this World, and strive more to secure it than for any Thing upon Earth?

P. I wish I could say so; I doubt there are but few that rise so high.

M. — Convinced that none can get to Heaven without being born again of the Spirit of God, have you earnestly desired to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and to be enabled to hate and forsake all Sin, and to love God fervently, and to serve him faithfully, and have you therefore bound yourself to God through Christ in a solemn Covenant?

P. I cannot say so, though I desire to amend.

M. — Is there no Trouble or Burthen in the World so grievous to you as the abominable Sinfulness of your Heart and Life?

P. I do not find it so; I wish I did.

M. — Had you rather perfectly know, love and serve God, than have all the Riches, Honours and Pleasures of this World?

P. I should be a Dissembler to say so.

M. — When you are tempted to your most beloved Sin, is the divine Command more powerful to keep you from it, than the Temptation and your own Lust to draw you to it?

P. I wish it were; I should then sin much less.

M. Are you willing to wait upon God in the constant and diligent Use of his appointed Means of
Grace,

Grace, such as, Preaching, Prayer, and Meditation, with the Company and Counsel of the Godly?

P. Happy for them that can, but I cannot.

M. — Are you resolved to part with Life and Liberty, rather than *make Shipwreck of Faith, and a good Conscience?*

P. I ought to do so, but am not able.

M. — In a Word, if you had never been baptized, would you now take God in Baptism for your only God and Father, Christ for your only Saviour, and the Holy Spirit for your Sanctifier, to save you from Sin and Hell, and bring you to Holiness and Glory; resolving to forsake the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and absolutely devoting yourself to God?

P. I ought to promise, and be baptised; but am doubtful of my hearty Consent to all this.

M. By these Answers I can form some Judgment of your Condition, and am sorry to say, that you appear to me to be yet unconverted, and under the Guilt and Power of your Sins, even *in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity*. But your Case is not without Remedy. If you are willing, Salvation may be had. You are not so far from it as many hardened Sinners. I observe an Openness in your Answers, and that you are not, like Multitudes, desperately opposing your own Conviction and Conversion.

P. I thank you for your Plainness and Faithfulness; but why do you judge of me so severely?

M. You have yourself confessed, that it is not with you, as it is with all who have the Spirit of Christ. I have long been afraid of this, and I will take the Freedom to suggest my Reasons for it.—One might be often in your Company, and hear Nothing but worldly Talk, not a Word of Heaven, or that discovered any Care of your own Soul.—I observed, you seemed always pleased with the Conversation of ignorant, worldly Men, or merry Sensualists; and to disrelish those who might have helped you in the Way

to Heaven.—I never heard of your setting up the Worship of God in your Family. The Souls of your Children and Servants were totally neglected. And frequently you have been absent from the House of God.—Now and then you have dropped an Oath, and in a Fit of Anger have proceeded to cursing. Common Talk and Business, or vain Amusements, have chiefly filled up your Lord's-Days. Such Things as these, with the evident Want of a Mind fixed on God and Heaven, made me fear your Case as bad as you now confess it. But sure I am, God saveth none but those who supremely love, honour, and obey him; who value Christ as their Saviour, and breathe his Spirit and Temper; and who labour for Heaven more than for Earth.

P. What you call a Confession, I am not unwilling to repeat. But, careless as I have been of my Soul, insensible of my Need of Christ, and fond of worldly Vanities, I was ready to conclude, that since all are Sinners, and God is merciful, I might be saved, if I believed in Christ. What it really is to believe in Christ, you have now made me understand better than I ever did before, and I perceive I did not sincerely believe and trust in Christ, when I thought I did.

M. Are there not, think you, such Sins as Presumption, carnal Security, false Faith, and false Hope, whereby Souls are undone?

P. I have often heard Preachers say so.

M. What do you apprehend Presumption to be?

P. Fancying we are accepted of God, and in a State of Salvation, when we are not.

M. What do you mean by carnal Security?

P. Carelessness about our Souls, when their Danger demandeth our greatest Care.

M. What is a false Faith?

P. It is believing God hath promised what he hath not, or that Christ will save those whom he hath declared he will not save.

M. And

M. And wherein consists a false Hope?

P. It is hoping for Heaven in a Way in which God hath plainly said, he will not give it.

M. Your Answers are just; but are not each of these Sins chargeable on yourself?

P. I begin to fear it; yet I would fain hope for the best. Pray what would you advise me to do?

M. I assure you, I have no Desire to trouble you with needless Fears, nor would I have you conclude your State bad merely on my Word; but, when you come Home, I intreat you to examine yourself impartially by the Word of God, and tell me the Result at our next Interview.

P. But suppose I should find myself in a bad State, what must I do then?

M. If you should find that yours is really an unconverted State, unholy, destitute of Peace with God, and every Moment exposed to his eternal Wrath and Curse, I would then advise you immediately to seek for Mercy to pardon you, and for the Grace and Spirit of Christ to sanctify you, and by no Means to despair, for there is an all-sufficient Remedy in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore as you love your own Soul, and dread the Thought of its perishing for ever, I beseech you not to delay your serious and impartial Self-Examination.

P. Alas! Sir, I know not how to examine myself. It is to me a strange Work. Will you be pleased to direct me?

M. With all my Heart, if you will but promise to do your best. And, first, set apart some Time for this very Business, and then be as earnest in it, as a Person that is casting up an Account of all he hath in the World. Take one Caution with you, not to be unwilling to know the worst by yourself.

P. What good will it do me to flatter and deceive myself, when it is impossible to deceive God? I desire to know my present State, that I may know what Course to take hereafter.

M. When

M. When you have read some Passage of Holy Scripture; as for Instance, *John III. Romans VIII. Psalm LI.* or any other; then earnestly pray for divine Help, and that God will mercifully lead you into Self-Acquaintance. In Order to this, look back on all your past Life, and look also into your Heart, and let Conscience compare your Heart and Life with the infallible Word of God, and be all Attention to the Voice of Scripture and of Conscience. Judge yourself, not by a few good or bad Thoughts or Actions, but by what hath had your chief Love, and hath been your leading Design, and hath excited your greatest Care and Diligence. Search what it is, whether God or the Creature, whether Christ or your Lusts, that hath been uppermost in your Esteem, and hath most filled and employed your Heart and Life. Follow on the Search till you know the Truth. If you cannot determine at one Trial, repeat the Trial again and again. May the Lord assist and succeed you! And whenever you are come to a Resolution, I shall be glad to see you, and hear what it is.



DIALOGUE II.

The Minister explains to his Parishioner the Nature of a Soul's Conversion from Sin to God and Holiness.

Minister. WELL, Neighbour, have you examined yourself by the Word of God, since I saw you?

Parishioner. I have done something in it.

M. And what do you now think of yourself?

P. When

P. When I read the Promises to all that believe in Christ, I was ready to hope myself safe. But in reading farther, I found myself, as you feared, an unconverted Sinner, that I *have not the Spirit and Temper of Christ*, and therefore *am none of his*. But now, Sir, I must intreat you to pity my Misery, and tell me, *what must I do to be saved?*

M. Are you resolved to do it, if it shall be explained and proved to you by Scripture?

P. Be it what it will, by the Grace of God, I am resolved to do it.

M. I again assure you, that your Case is not remediless. A full and compleat Salvation is provided in the Gospel for you, as well as for others. This Remedy is Nothing else but Christ and his Grace. *God hath given us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath Life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not Life.* Christ having offered up himself a Sacrifice for our Sins, and merited our Reconciliation, Justification and Salvation, he promiseth and covenanteth to give us Pardon and eternal Life. In Order to apply this Salvation to Sinners, he calleth them by his Word and Ministry, and giveth them his sanctifying Spirit to prepare them for heavenly Glory, and only requireth of them such Faith as shews its sincerity by Repentance, Love and holy Obedience. And is not this glad Tidings to a miserable Sinner?

P. I perceive there is Hope concerning me; but indeed, Sir, I have heard the Gospel so carelessly, that I must beg to have these Things opened to me more fully and plainly.

M. I know you were baptised in Infancy; but your Parents' Covenant-engagement for you serves no longer than till you are capable of covenanting for yourself. Have you ever seriously considered the Nature of your Baptismal Covenant, and renewed it yourself, by giving up yourself to God?

P. I

P. I never once attended to it. Only I thought it sufficiently regenerated me, and made me a Child of God, and an Heir of Heaven.

M. But how was you to have Forgiveness for Sins committed since your Baptism?

P. I confessed them to God, and some of them to the Minister that received me to the Lord's-Supper, and thought I was then forgiven, though I never had the right Influence of it on my Heart and Life.

M. If, as soon as you were capable, you had sincerely renewed your Baptismal Covenant, and kept it, you would no more have needed to be converted or regenerated, but only to have repented for particular Sins. I will therefore put you upon no other Conversion, than to review your Baptism, and understand it well, and as deliberately make the same Covenant with God over again, as if you yourself had never been concerned with it, or rather had never kept it.

P. If Conversion is no more than to be a real Christian, instead of a merely nominal and hypocritical one, I have no more Reason to object against it, than against Baptism or Christianity; and this maketh me very desirous to understand the Nature of the Baptismal Covenant.

M. In order to that, it is necessary for you to consider well the principal Truths of Christianity.

P. I have often heard and repeated the Creed, which contains them, but never attended to its Meaning.

M. We are thereby taught to view the blessed God, as our Creator and Proprietor, our Lord and Ruler, our Benefactor and chief Good, who hath all Perfection and Excellency in and from himself. We are taught to view ourselves, as Creatures of God, who are fallen from our first State of Innocence, in which Man was made, and for our Sinfulness are exposed to the Wrath and Curse of God; but that divine Mercy provided Redemption for us
through

through the meritorious Incarnation, Sufferings and Death of the Son of God. We are taught to view the Covenant of Grace, as an Engagement of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to become our reconciled God and Father, our Saviour, and our Sanctifier; and an Engagement on our Part, to give up ourselves sincerely and unreservedly to God, through Christ, by the Aids of the Holy Spirit, for Justification and Salvation, and in all new and holy Obedience; ever renouncing the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, that would tempt us to contradict this Engagement. This is the Baptismal Covenant, and you have often seen it outwardly administered. All that sincerely engage in this Covenant are justified, and sanctified, and have a Right and Title to eternal Life. The Holy Spirit is peculiarly given to all such, to dwell in them, and gradually renew them to greater Knowledge of God, and more fervent Love to him, Desire after him, and Activity for him. We are also taught, that, at Death, the Souls of Men enter into everlasting Joy or Misery; and that, at the End of the World, Christ will come in Glory, and raise the Dead, and all Men shall receive according to their Works. They that have sincerely kept this Covenant, so far as in different Ages, and under different Dispensations of Grace, it was made known unto them, shall be openly justified, and glorified, and be made perfectly blessed, in Soul and Body, with Saints and Angels, in the full Enjoyment, and compleat Knowledge, Love and Service of God for ever and ever. They that have not performed this Covenant, shall for ever be deprived of this Glory, and suffer the everlasting Torments of Hell with Devils and all impenitent Sinners.—Some competent Knowledge of these Truths is necessary to your understanding the Nature of the Baptismal Covenant, or of Repentance, Conversion, and real Christianity.

P. Alas! Sir, when shall I be able to understand and remember all this?

M. It

M. It is by no Means necessary to remember these Words ; if you take in the Sentiments, it is enough.

P. Whatever Knowledge I may attain in these Things, I suppose Knowledge alone will not be enough, even though I should be ever so firmly persuaded of the Truth and Importance of the Things themselves. And you have been intimating the Necessity of my having something more than an enlightened Understanding, or the firmest Persuasion, with Respect to any Truths.

M. Yes, I must now add, that to consent to the Baptismal Covenant with full Purpose of Heart and Will, is the principal Part of Religion and Holiness, and without which the clearest Discerning and firmest Belief of the Truths contained in the Covenant will be utterly ineffectual to eternal Salvation. What the Will is, that is the Man and the Christian. Christ takes you for his own, if you heartily resolve to be his. He complaineth, *Men will not come unto him, that they might have Life.* And he promiseth, *whoever come to him, he will in no wise cast them out.*

P. And have I no more to do, but to consent to the Covenant with my Heart and Will?

M. It implieth, that you persevere in your hearty Consent, which cannot be, without duly attending the Means of Grace Christ hath appointed, and discharging the Duties Christ hath commanded ; or in other Words, without the whole of practical Godliness.

P. Pray, Sir, explain to me what you mean by practical Godliness?

M. The *Foundation* of practical Godliness is laid in your Relation to a Covenant-God. By devoting yourself to him, you become his special Property, and therefore must live to him, and seek his Glory, and be satisfied with all his Disposals. You become the Subject of his Government, and therefore must endeavour to obey him absolutely. You also become his Child and Friend, and therefore must abide and abound in Faithfulness and Love to him.—The *De-*

sign

sign of practical Godliness is, that you may be fully delivered from all Sin and Misery, and be made more holy, more profitable to Man, and may more abundantly glorify your Father, Redeemer and Sanctifier, by your bearing the divine Image, and breathing a divine Temper in the present World; and finally, that you may be perfectly holy and happy in the glorious World above, there to dwell with Christ for ever, and know, and love, and praise him, with all his Saints and Angels. This noble End and Design must be ever in your Eye, as the great and constant Motive to direct and influence all your Practice.

—The *Rule* of practical Godliness is especially the Word of God, and Gospel of Christ. For the Law and Light of Nature, and of Conscience, is insufficient without the Holy Scriptures. Christ particularly commands us, to believe on him as our Saviour, to hope for Heaven by his Purchase and Promise, to love God for his Mercy and Grace in our Redemption, to pray for the Holy Spirit, and cherish his Influences; to regard the Ministers of his Gospel, the Ordinances of his Worship, the Discipline of his House and the Sanctification of his Day.

—The *Degree* of practical Godliness necessary to our Salvation is Sincerity; or, such a prevailing Tendency of Heart and Life to obey our Creator and Redeemer, as to make it the chief Business we transact in the World, and to which every Thing else is subservient. But remember always, that you are destitute of this Sincerity, unless you have a Desire and Endeavour after Perfection, and a Mourning for every conscious Imperfection; and that the Degrees of future Glory must certainly be in Proportion to the present Degrees of Holiness.—The *Enemies* of practical Godliness are, at all Times, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Be not ignorant of the Nature and Danger of their Opposition, but resolve, by the Grace of God, to renounce them more deliberately,

berately, and to carry on your Resistance and Warfare against them to the End of Life.

P. This is a great deal to remember.

M. You only think so, because you have so intirely neglected these Things in your Youth, which is the best Time for learning the Will of God, and the Way of Salvation. Had you then loved the Scriptures and other pious Books, and been much employed in Reading, Meditation and Prayer, and had devoted your Lord's Days to these Purposes, instead of Play and Idleness, and vain Talk, you would now have found such Things as these plain and familiar to you. Let me however intreat you to fix upon your Memory the Substance of what I have been now saying.

P. What is that?

M. I mean this short View of your Baptismal Covenant, *To believe in, and heartily give up yourself to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, your Proprietor and Ruler, your chief Good, and ultimate End and Aim, renouncing the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.*

P. There is no great Difficulty in remembering this, but my Heart has been a Stranger to the Sense and Meaning.

M. Your Duty is summed up in a yet narrower Compass, even in *Love, which is the fulfilling of the Law.*

P. What Love do you mean?

M. The Love of God, of your Neighbour, and of yourself.

P. This is very reasonable Duty, which Nobody can object to, and one Part of it I shall easily keep, which is, to *love myself.*

M. Alas! poor Man, how have you kept it hitherto? What Enemy have you had in all the World comparable to yourself? What, though all your Enemies should slander, oppress, imprison, or otherwise abuse you? They cannot hinder your Salvation, nor
make

make God love you ever the less, nor make Death the more terrible to you, nor will their Enmity ever be your sorrowful Reflection in Heaven, provided you do no Wrong and Injury to yourself. All the Enemies in the World cannot force you to commit one Sin, nor make God your Enemy; but you yourself have committed Thousands of Sins, and made yourself an Enemy to God. O the Folly of ungodly Men! How hard for them to forgive a small Injury to another, and yet they can abuse and destroy their own Souls, and even expose them to Hell, and after all can easily forgive themselves! Was it not *you*, even *you yourself*, that forgot your God, neglected your Saviour, resisted the Holy Spirit, refused sanctifying Grace, despised Heaven, and preferred this perishing World? Was it not you yourself that neither loved Holiness, nor a holy God, nor holy Thoughts, Words, nor Ways? Did not you yourself lose your precious Time, omit almost all your Duty, and exceedingly multiply your own Sins? Tho' the Devil did his utmost to hurt you, what could he do more than tempt you to sin? Had you been a sworn Enemy to yourself, and plotted the greatest Mischief against yourself, what could you have done worse, than you have done, by loving Sin, refusing Grace, and displeasing God? And are you a Lover of yourself?

P. All this is too true; and yet I am sure I love myself. How then cometh all this to pass?

M. Your *Self-love* is chiefly dictated by *Sense*, little by *Reason*, much less by *Faith*. Like the Brutes, you love your bodily Appetites, but you have little or no Care for your Soul. You love yourself, but you love not what is good for yourself; as a sick Man loveth his Life and Health, but abhorreth his Meat and Medicine. There is a Self-Love implanted in our Nature, and therefore the ten Commandments only express the Love of God and our Neighbour. But the Gospel calleth upon Sinners to *love, care, and labour* for their own Souls. Your very *Repentance*

consisteth in being angry with yourself, and loathing yourself for your Sins. And till you come to see what you have done against yourself, you will never have such lowly self-abasing, and self-diffident Thoughts, as are necessary to your own Salvation. Act but like a Man that loveth himself, and you are safe. God intreateth you to have Mercy on yourself. He hath unchangeably fixed in his Gospel the Terms on which he will have Mercy upon Sinners. They will cry to God for Mercy, Mercy, when the Day of Judgment is come, and it is too late; but *now*, in this *accepted Time*, in this *Day of Salvation*, no Counsel, no Reason, no Intreaty will persuade them to accept of Mercy. Though the Ministers of *Christ*, in *his Stead*, beseech Men to be reconciled to God, and to accept of his sanctifying and saving Mercy, yet all their Plea for Neglect is, "We hope to be saved, for God is merciful." Like a Thief intreated by the Judge not to cast away his Life, but still returns again to his evil Courses, and yet at the Bar or Gallows cryeth out for Mercy: Or like a Beggar praying for an Alms, but refusing it when it is offered.

P. You describe a Condition that is very bad. But might it not more properly be compared to a Patient desiring his Physician to heal him, at the same Time that he cannot be prevailed upon to take Physick. As Men would have Health without Medicines, so they would have Salvation without the strait and narrow Way to it.

M. There is some Truth in your Remark, and also some Mistake. Holiness is not only the Soul's Medicine, but its Health. Perfect Holiness will be Heaven itself. Therefore to refuse Holiness, is to refuse both Health and Heaven.

P. God knoweth this hath been my Case. I have been my own greatest Enemy, and have done more against myself than all the World beside. Now I see it is not so easy to love one's own Soul, as I thought.

But

But he that will not *love God*, it is Pity he should live; for God is all Goodness.

M. Oh! my Friend, it is far more difficult to love God than yourself. I assure you, your Want of Love to God is the greatest of all your Sins. If there were more true Love to God, there would be more Title to Salvation; for none that sincerely love God, shall perish. I know all Men love something in God. They love him as their Creator and Preserver. But they love him not as their holy and righteous Governour, who forbiddeth Sin, hateth and punisheth the Ungodly, and neither forgiveth, nor saveth the Impenitent. If you had truly loved God, you would have loved his Word and Worship, and have delighted to do his Will. Did you love God, when you broke his Laws, hated Holiness, and treated an obedient and heavenly Life as an intolerable Burthen? You may as well say, that he loveth the King, who riseth up in Rebellion against him. As long as you think you were a lover of God in your sinful State of Life, you know not God, nor yourself, nor the Nature and Necessity of true Conversion. Is it not evident, that you have all your Life been an Enemy to God, and a Hater of God?

P. I have been an Enemy to myself, but sure Nobody can hate God.

M. *The carnal Mind is Enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* If there were no Enmity between God and Man, what Need of a Mediator? And will you think so ill of God, and so well of yourself, as to conclude the Enmity is only in God, and not in you? Is God an Enemy to any Man, that is not first an Enemy to God? *God hateth all the Workers of Iniquity*, because they are all Enemies to him, and as contrary to his Holiness, as Darkness is to Light. Let your Conscience say, were not you *a Lover of Pleasure more than a Lover of God*? Were not your Thoughts more on the World, and its Interests, than on God and his Glory?

You know what it is to love your Friend, or Money, or Pleasure, and have you as much experienced what it is to love God? If you love him not above all, you love him not as God. If you had no Enmity to a holy and heavenly Life, why did you not chuse it? And why could not all the divine Teachings, Intreaties, and Mercies invite and persuade you to it? Why were you so backward? Is this no Enmity? And if you were an Enemy to Holiness, and to God's holy Word and Government, was not this Enmity to God himself? Indeed we are all Enemies to God, till Christ hath reconciled us, and the Holy Spirit hath renewed us, and turned the Enmity into Love.

P. I knew myself a Sinner, but never till now did I know myself an Enemy to God, though I have often feared that for my Sins he was an Enemy to me. I now perceive that all Sin hath in it some Enmity against God.

M. Have you not heard how *Enmity was put between the Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent*? And how soon it was manifested in the two first Brethren, *Cain and Abel*? For *Cain was of that wicked One, and slew his Brother*; and wherefore slew he him? *Because his own Works were evil, and his Brother's righteous*. Whence come all the Reproaches and Slanders, all the Cruelties of Persecution, and the multiplied Names of Martyrs, but from this inbred Enmity? Is not this the Meaning of *Christ's ending not Peace, but a Sword on Earth*? May we not say with *Paul*, on Account of the Wicked still hating and opposing the Godly, *As then he that was born after the Flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now*? What were any of us till recovered by divine Grace? *When we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son*. He that will be a Friend of the World, is an Enemy to God. *The Friendship of the World is Enmity to God*. *Those mine Enemies, saith Christ, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before*

before me. And are not worldly Minds and fleshly Lusts his Enemies? And hath not this been your Case?

P. I cannot deny it. May the Lord forgive me, and have Mercy on me! I see it is not so easy, nor so common, to love God, as I thought.

M. To love God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, is the holy Image of God on the Soul, the proper Fruit of the Spirit, the certain Evidence of our Interest in divine Favour, and the Beginning and Foretaste of Heaven. To accomplish this in us, Christ came into our World, and thereby gave the most wonderful Demonstration of God's Love to us, and the most powerful Motive to engage us to love God, *Faith working by Love,* is the whole of Religion. Therefore if Love to God were easy and common, all Goodness, and Salvation itself, would be in Proportion.—But what think you of *loving your Neighbour*? Is that also easy to you?

P. I am sometimes angry when I am wronged or insulted, but I know no one in the World that I wish ill to.

M. So far it is well. But do you love Men more for the Sake of God and his Image upon them, than for your own Sake? Do you *love your Neighbour as yourself*? An unconverted Sinner maketh his inordinate Self-Love the Standard and Reason of his Love to Others. He loveth not those best, who are best, and most holy, and most useful; but those from whom he himself receiveth most Love and Honour, who agree with him in Opinion, conform most intirely to his Will and Humour, and contribute most to his worldly Interest. On the contrary, a true Christian loves his Neighbour, as you love the Children of your dearest Friend, for the Sake of the Parent. Have not you loved a worldly Man, a Swearer, and Opposer of serious Religion, if he spoke well of you, took your Part, or did you some friendly

Offices, better than the most wise and godly Person, by whom your Vices had been observed and re-proved?

P. I cannot deny but you describe me rightly.

M. Did you never dishonour your Superiors? Nor desire to revenge yourself upon others? Nor endeavour to deceive or injure your Neighbour? Nor slander, backbite, ridicule, or falsely accuse him? Did you never envy him, nor covet his Estate or Honours, nor seek to undermine him? If so, what was this but sinful Self-Love? On the other Hand, with what Condescension, Self-denial and Diligence have you testified your Love to your Neighbour? What Labour and Expence have you been at to save the Souls of perishing Sinners, or to relieve their Bodies? For *who so seeth his Brother have Need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?*—At least, hath it been with any such Love, as that with which you love yourself? How easily can you bear your Neighbour's Wrongs or Reproaches, his Sickness or Poverty, in Comparifon with your own? You can aggravate his Faults, and extenuate your own; and even consign him to Punishment for a Crime which you overlook in yourself.

P. I must confess I have sinned against the Love of God, my Neighbour, and myself. And I see the Necessity of a better Heart.

M. On the whole, what think you now of the Baptifmal Covenant? Can you heartily give up yourself to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

P. O! Sir, it is a grand Concern. I must have many a Thought of it, before I shall understand it well, and many more Thoughts to over-come all the Backwardness of my Heart. Such a Work is not to be done rashly.

M. I like your Answer. I hope it doth not proceed from Reluctance, or an Inclination to Delay. What is so necessary, cannot be done too soon, if it be done well.

well. None can come after Christ, and be his Disciple, without sitting down first, and counting the Cost. It is said of the Bereans, they were more noble than others, in that they received the Word with all Readiness of Mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those Things were so, which had been taught them by the Apostles.

P. But why then were Thousands baptised the very same Day they were converted?

M. They were *Jews*, and had been instructed in the Divine Law, and solemnly entered into the Covenant of God, and therefore wanted no necessary Knowledge, except that of the *Messiah's* being actually come, whose coming they themselves were expecting. And though their Conversion and Baptism were the same Day, they gave sufficient Evidence of a credible Profession, by their Humiliation, Confession, and penitent Desires to be acquainted with the Way of Salvation through Christ, and all this in direct Opposition to prevailing Customs and Prejudices. If you yourself have now a distinct Knowledge of the Baptismal Covenant, and are fully resolved to consent to it, and to perform it, I would advise you to renew it without Delay.

P. Since I need to make the same Preparation, Profession, and Covenant, as if I had never been baptised, would it not have been better to have omitted *Infant-Baptism*? Why should we be baptised before we believe?

M. Baptism is the Door of Entrance into the Gospel Church, nor is there any Precept or Example for entering any other Way. As for Infants, they were Church-Members before Christ's Incarnation, and he came not to destroy, but to enlarge Church-Privileges. Infant-Church-Membership doth not cease with Circumcision; for during the forty Years in the Wilderness tho' the Israelitish Children were uncircumcised, yet in that Interval they were expressly entered into Covenant with God. Before Circumcision was

instituted, it appears that God ever joined the Children with the Parents in his Promises and Threatenings. When Circumcision was first appointed, God made it the indispensable Duty of Parents to enter their Infants into the Covenant, nor hath it been ever reversed; and under the Gospel there is no appointed Way of entering into Covenant, but by Baptism. *Christ was much displeased, when his Disciples rebuked those that brought young Children to him, and said unto them, suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God;* and therefore he is still ready to receive them, whenever dedicated to him, though he did not then baptize them, because the common Use of Christian Baptism was to begin after his Death and Resurrection. When the Apostle telleth believing Parents, that *their Children are holy*, he must mean more than legitimate, or they could not be superior to the Children of Heathens. We read of *Apostles baptizing whole Households*. Indeed Infant-Baptism hath been the Practice of the Christian Church in all Ages. And as Infants share in the visible Effects of human Apostacy, why should we imagine the Remedy by Christ so narrow, as to exclude that Period of Life which is first miserable, and leave no visible Way of their Recovery by Promise and Covenant in which they are personally concerned? How could we hope for the Salvation of Infants without a Promise?

P. But Infants cannot believe.

M. Nor do they sin actually, and yet they need a Saviour. And though they believe not actually, they are the Infants of professedly believing Parents.

P. But what good doth it do to those that have no Understanding, to be baptised?

M. It is good to have a Covenant-Relation to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and a visible Title to the Blessings of the Covenant; and if they die in Infancy, to have a Right to eternal Life. You take a Lease of Lands for your Child's Life as well as your own

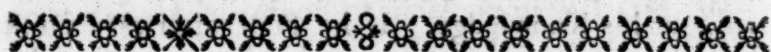
own, and make him a Party in the Contract, though without his Knowledge. If he shall afterward think himself wronged, he may quit his Part, whether for Earth, or for Heaven, whenever he please.

P. But I perceive in my own Case, we should do it better, if we did it with Understanding.

M. Your Parents ought to have engaged you to God in Covenant with Understanding, though you were then incapable of it. And your former Baptism doth not hinder your doing it now with the best Temper of Mind. All Men are prone to rest in the Externals of Religion. Many lay too great Strefs on the outward Washing, who do not enough consider the Nature of the Covenant. Though you need not repeat your Baptism, yet the Covenant itself is often to be renewed in the Lord's-Supper. You have sinfully neglected the due Consideration of your Infant-Baptism; but the same Covenant is to be renewed upon your Repentance, and will entitle you to the same Benefits, though you are not rebaptised. Therefore now renew your Covenant with so much the deeper Humiliation and Seriousness, considering how long and with what Aggravations you have neglected and broken it.

P. Have you any more Advice on this Head?

M. Yes; if you desire to be a Christian indeed, let your Consent be to the whole Covenant, and not merely to a Part. Be willing to be sanctified, as well as to be pardoned; and to be saved from the Love and Practice, as well as the Punishment of Sin. Take God, and Christ, and Heaven for your compleat Happiness, and cleave to it, though you should meet with ever so much Tribulation in the present World. Make no secret Exception or Reserve in Favour of any one Sin. Do all this immediately and without Delay. And I hope it will not be long before you come to me again, and let me know your Resolution.



DIALOGUE III.

The Minister answereth a Variety of Objections against a holy and heavenly Life brought to prejudice the Parishioner's Mind by a gay Gentleman of his Acquaintance.

Minister. WELCOME, Neighbour ; I did not expect you so soon. Now let me know the Result of our last Conversation.

Parishioner. Since I saw you, I have had some Talk with my Landlord, Sir E—— D——, who you know is a Gentleman of great Learning, and he so much opposeth all you have said, that I am in Doubt and Perplexity. However, I have prevailed upon him to come with me, that I may know which of you is in the Right.

M. Desire the Gentleman to come in.

Gentleman. You may well wonder, Sir, at seeing me this Morning. But I find your Talk hath disturbed the Mind of my honest Tenant, that he is scarce fit for Work or Play. I wish there was less Noise about Religion.

M. Why should it be thought strange, to have a Man's Thoughts trouble him, after he hath long been neglecting his own Happiness ?

G. I never heard of this Man's saying or doing any Harm. He hath minded his Business, gone to Church, lived quietly in the Parish, and now you make him doubt of his Salvation.

M. Sir,

M. Sir, I wish no Man to doubt of his Salvation without Cause, nor would I have any Man presume. The saving or losing the Soul for ever is a grand Affair. But God only is the Judge, and not you, or I. His Word is the Rule of his Judgment, and pretty plainly telleth us whom he will save. I assure you, Sir, I have done no more with this Man, than enquire how it is with his Soul, and set the Word of God before him, that thereby he may form a Judgment of his own State.

G. How can it mend any Man, to cast him into Terrors? Is not believing and hoping well the Way to Salvation?

M. It is not well, to believe and hope falsely. He that neither knoweth, nor feareth a Danger, will not avoid it. *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom.* We are commanded to *fear him, who is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*; and to *serve God acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear, for our God is a consuming Fire.* Were a Physician to tell his Patient the Danger of his Case, if he doth not take his Prescriptions, and you should come and say there is no Danger; which is the Patient's Friend? I encourage his rational, and you his false Hopes.

G. When you should draw Men to believe, you drive them to Doubting and Unbelief.

M. There is no Word of God promiseth Salvation to the Ungodly. Believing that we shall be saved, doth not prove it. It is vain for your Tenant to believe he hath paid you your Rent, if he hath no Receipt to produce. Christ will pardon and save all sincere Believers; and to doubt of this, is sinful. But we may doubt of our own Sincerity. A Drunkard may doubt of his own Sobriety, and yet have no Doubt of the Truth of the Gospel.

G. If poor Men hearken to all you say, you will drive them to Despair at last.

M. We teach them how to prevent everlasting Despair. What if you had heard *Paul say to the Soldiers, except these Sailors abide in the Ship, ye cannot be saved?* Would you have charged him with preaching Despair? Or, with being the Cause of the Shipwreck? When Christ declared, *Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God; Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;* would you have said, It leadeth to Despair, and is not to be believed? Did the Devil preach better than God, when he contradicted the divine Declaration to *Eve, In the Day thou eatest, thou shalt die;* but told her, *Ye shall not surely die?* Till Men despair of being saved without Holiness, they will never seek Heaven in the appointed Way.

G. Christ came to abolish the Law, and set up the Gospel; and therefore Mercy better becometh the Lips of a Gospel-Preacher.

M. Repentance and Conversion are Gospel-Mercies. The Law knoweth no Place for Repentance; its Language is, Sin and die. As Gospel Ministers, we are to intreat Men to accept of Mercy, and neither refuse, or abuse it. Pray, Sir, what Mercy would you preach, if you were a Minister?

G. I would tell Men of God's Mercy, and that it is greater than all their Sins, and that Christ died for Sinners, and to save all that believe.

M. This merciful God hath said, *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* We preach the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Christ; but we also add, that if Men reject Christ and Mercy, they will increase their own Misery. Would you promise them Salvation without bringing forth Fruits meet for Repentance?

G. I would tell them that a quiet and sober Religion will be accepted, and that all the Noise you make,

make, doth but fill their Minds with needles Perplexity.

M. O! Sir, it is the Voice of God himself, *There is no Peace to the Wicked; the Way of Peace they know not, and there is no Judgment in their Goings; they have made them crooked Paths; whosoever goeth therein, shall not know Peace. They have seduced my People, saying, Peace, and there was no Peace. When they shall say, Peace and Safety, then sudden Destruction cometh upon them, as Travail upon a Woman with Child, and they shall not escape.* If Sin be the Way of Peace, why did it drown the old World? Why did it crucify Christ? Why doth it expose to eternal Damnation? Can you in your Conscience be persuaded, that a truly godly Man, who hath chiefly been laying up Treasure in Heaven, is not more likely to die in Peace, than one whose Life hath been spent in Sin and Folly? And is not that the best Way to live in Peace, which will render Death itself the most peaceful? Where then is the quiet and sober Religion you talk of?

G. The Religion I mean, is, to love God and my Neighbour, and do as I would be done by, and go to Church, and say my Prayers; and when I have sinned, repent, and cry for Mercy, and trust in Christ, and so be quiet, and give myself no farther Trouble.

M. You have said a great Deal in a few Words. But saying this will not save us, except we do it. Permit me a little to illustrate your Expressions.—If you *love God*, you will love his Laws and Government, his Service and Servants, you will love to please him, and desire to be with him, and will delight more in his Presence than in all the Pleasures of this World. You cannot think that Man loveth you, who careth not how far he is from you, nor how little he hath to do with you, nor whether he ever heareth, thinketh, or speaketh of you. Love to God is to keep his Commandments, and not treating Sin as your greatest Pleasure, and Obedience to God as
your

your greatest Pain, and the Word and Worship of God as the great Troubles of the World.—If you *love your Neighbour as yourself*, you will not grind the Poor, nor rack your Tenants, nor lay out Hundreds, and Thousands in Sports and Amusements, in Pomp and Pageantry, in Dissipation and Riot. You will not see your Brother have Need, and shut up your Bowels of Compassion from him, and still say, you love God and your Neighbour. You will not hate and vilify the faithful Servants of God, and yet pretend to love God and them. Nor will you fancy it a loving your Neighbour as yourself, when you feel a Fondness for your Companions in Vice.—As *for your repenting when you have sinned, and crying for Mercy*, I hope you do not mean to mock God, with saying you repent, when you do not; and wishing you had not sinned, but still go on, and do the same; crying for Mercy, but still living in Debauchery and Impiety, and hating those that testify against it. True Repentance changeth all the Mind, Will, and Conversation. To this only I have been persuading my Neighbour, though you say I have troubled him, and broke his Peace.

G. You treat me, Sir, with a truly Priest-like Indecency and Insolence. Under Pretence of reproving Sin you assume a Liberty of reproaching the most respectable Characters.

M. I knew, Sir, on what Disadvantage I should discourse with you; but I do it for the Sake of this poor Man, who desired it. I am persuaded, on any other Subject, you would make no Complaint of my Indecency and Disrespect; nor have I now given any just Occasion for it. Why should you expect me to conceal the Truth of God for Fear of mortal Man?

G. You would have Rich and Poor live all alike, and we must submit to make the same Appearance as they do, and have as little Self-Enjoyment.

M. No, Sir; but Death will soon level you with common Dust, and *then, whose shall these Things be*
which

which you possess? Tho' you are not called to share with the Poor in their present Inconveniences and Afflictions, yet it is necessary for you, according to your Situation, to labour as diligently, and be as mortified and self-denying, as they. Wealth is no just Apology for, though a powerful Temptation to, Idleness and Luxury.—But give me Leave, Sir, to return from this Digression, and ask, what there is in my Doctrine, which you think so troublesome to my Neighbour?

G. I have told you, it disquieteth Men's Consciences.

M. But in what Respect doth my Doctrine tend to excite a false Alarm in the Minds of Men?

G. You would have them believe that God made us to damn us, contrary to his Mercies.

M. If we believe the Word of God, we must conclude, that some will be damned for their Sins, that God best knoweth who they are, and how to use his own Mercy. But tell me, Sir, if I ever deny Salvation, where God hath promised it.

G. You confine Religion to a small Party; and how empty will Heaven be, if all are excluded, whom you please to censure and condemn?

M. If the Party you refer to, be that which Scripture calleth Believers and Penitent, Regenerate and Holy, you must yourself believe that Promises of Salvation are made to none but such. All the World is of two Parties; the Godly, and the Ungodly. Christ expressly and earnestly confineth Salvation to them, who are *born again of the Spirit*, and are *converted*; and *lay up Treasures in Heaven*, so as to have *their Heart there also*; and who *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*. St. Paul confineth it to them, who are *new Creatures*; and *have the Spirit of Christ*; and *mind the Things of the Spirit*; and *mortify the Lusts of the Flesh*; and who *have their Conversation in Heaven*. Are these the Words of Man, or of God? Are

we censorious for believing them ourselves, and persuading Others to believe them?

G. You quote the Word of God in Contradiction to the Goodness and Mercy of his Nature. How incredible, that a few contemptible Party-Names should be on the List of Salvation, and all the rest of the World be damned!

M. There hath been no Age, in which Terms of Reproach were not invented in Order to render the most faithful Servants of God, either ridiculous, or odious. But every prudent Man will distinguish between Names and Things. *Blessed, saith Christ to his Disciples, are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake. They, of whom the World was not worthy, had Trial of cruel Mockings.* But for the Sake of Heaven, who would not patiently be derided by those who are themselves hastening to Hell?—Instead of being offended, that God should save none but those, however few they are, who love him, and mind Heaven more than carnal Pleasure and worldly Prosperity; you had better lay your Hand upon your Heart, and examine yourself. Will you tell God, that he hath made a Law, or given us a Word, which is contrary to the Mercy and Goodness of his Nature? Is it contrary to the Goodness of God, to exclude those from Heaven, who refuse it, are averse to it, or prefer any vile Lust before it? Heaven is a State of perfect Holiness; and though you will not have Holiness, yet you fancy you desire Heaven.—And is not God just, as well as good? Is it contrary to the Goodness of the King to hang a Thief or Murderer? And were there many such, must they therefore be unpunished? If God saved a Thousand or ten Thousand for one that he condemneth, are you sure it would consist with his Goodness? And if ten Thousand to one in this wicked World were damned, perhaps it would not amount to one in many Millions of the holy and happy in the rest of the Creation. But
while

while we are so ignorant of these Things, how very unfit are we to quarrel with God about them !

G. This is saying something ; but it is no Justification of your arrogantly claiming Heaven before your Neighbours. We are all as you think, prophane and ungodly People, and you say to us, *Stand by, I am holier than Thou* ; and even treat us, as the Pharisee did the Publican, *I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as other Men are, or even as this Publican.*

M. If any arrogate the Name of Holiness, without the Thing, he is an Hypocrite. If you have real Godliness, you are the Child of God, and the Heir of Heaven, as well as any others. The Godly and the Wicked are not all alike. And must he that hath the Grace of God be unthankful for it ? Those are like the unhumbléd Pharisee, who thank God for the Grace they have not, and not they that humbly thank him for what they have.

G. You are the true Off-Spring of the Pharisees, a Pack of godly Hypocrites, *a Generation pure in your own Eyes, but not cleansed from your Filthiness* ; in secret you are as bad as any others.

M. Who do you mean, Sir ?

G. I mean all or most of you that pretend to be so religious above other Men.

M. Would you have us Drunkards, Swearers, Fornicators, for Fear of being Hypocrites ? Would you have no Man profess himself a Christian, or a Servant of God ? If you profess yourself to be a real Christian, are you therefore an Hypocrite ? You profess Christianity, and I profess no more. Our Consciences and Lives must tell, which of us is the Hypocrite. Many that fear God, are so far from being *pure in their own Eyes*, that the Greatness of their Sins is their continual Burthen, and they are ready to conclude themselves Hypocrites.—But how come you to know our Hypocrisy, and what we are in secret ? If you know it, it is not secret : If it be secret you know it not. If our Lives be vicious, prove it, and admonish us. If not,
how

how do you know our Hearts are vicious? Is not God the only Searcher of Hearts?—I am glad, indeed, if you hate Hypocrisy. The Hypocrite is one who professeth to be what he is not. Need I ask you, which is the Hypocrite, he who hateth all known Sin, and *seeketh God diligently*; or he who, professing the same Christianity, liveth in Drunkenness, Fornication, and all Sensuality, and maketh a Jest of serious Piety, and treateth the faithful Servants of Christ as Persons that are *righteous overmuch*?

G. Are not *all Men Sinners*? And doth not he *deceive himself, who saith he hath no Sin*? Why then do you make such a wide Difference between yourselves and others?

M. But, Sir, are there not Sinners that shall be saved in Heaven, and Sinners that shall go to Hell? Sinners that are, and others that are not pardoned? And is not this because there are Sinners that are penitent and truly converted, and others that are not so? Some Sinners that *make Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*, and others that strive to mortify such Lusts? If you will not distinguish between the two Sorts, God will; and you shall shortly see it. Were they not all Sinners, to whom Christ distinguishingly said, *Come ye Blessed, and go ye Cursed*?

G. The Difference is, that you are the Pharisees, and we are the Publicans; you *justify yourselves*, and we *smite on our Breasts, saying, God be merciful to us Sinners*! And which of these was justified of God?

M. Do you think, Sir, Christ meant a dissembling Publican, who only repented in Pretence? Doth God justify Hypocrites? Or was it not a sincere Penitent, who confessed his Sins, and went Home with a new Heart and Life? And is not this all I am persuading your Tenant to? If you yourself be this Publican, *Go and do likewise*; repent, confess, and be converted to a holy Life.—As for the Pharisees, they set up the *Traditions of Men* against the Word of God, and made Religion consist in mere Ceremonies. They

drew

drew near to God with their Lips, when their Hearts were far from him; and were strict in tithing Mint, Annise, and Cumin, but omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Truth. They built the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnished the Sepulchres of the Righteous, while they were the great Persecutors of Christ and his Apostles.

G. You should have added, that they *devoured Widow's Houses, and for a Pretence made long Prayers;* and so do you.

M. Tell me what *Widow's House* I have devoured, and I promise your Worship to make speedy Restitution. As for *long Prayers*, I beg Leave to ask, was it the Length of Prayer, or the false Pretence, which Christ reproved? If the Length, why did Christ himself *continue all Night in Prayer*? And why are we bid to *pray without ceasing*?

G. No, Christ blameth the false Pretence.

M. And is it not a Proof that long Prayer is good and laudable, when it is not made a Cloke for Sin, and particularly for Covetousness and Oppression?

G. You are noted for being a covetous Sort of People. It is true, you will not swear, but you will lie like Devils.

M. We constantly declare, Sir, that Liars are not in a State of Salvation. Therefore you must prove it against the particular Persons whom you accuse. When we know of such, we labour to bring them to Repentance.

G. There are as many Villanies committed secretly among you, as any where. I appeal to the Conduct of some of your Professors of Religion, who have lately been charged with great Wickedness; and you are all alike.

M. If they sin secretly, they are Hypocrites, whom we endeavour to convince and convert, as Persons *in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bond of Iniquity*. If they were serious Christians, and have fallen into some open and enormous Crimes, and have truly repented,

pented, I would only ask, whether one Sin with Repentance, is as bad as a Life of Sin without Repentance? But wherever you, Sir, as a *Magistrate*, shalt find among us any Scandals of a christian Profession, and prove the Facts, you shall have our best Help and Thanks.

G. You would fain seem perfect, and without Sin.

M. Every godly Man is so humbled in the Sense of his Sins, that he *loathes himself in his own Sight*, and daily confesseth his Sins with Grief and Shame. Why do we exhort others to sincere Repentance, if we ourselves are not convinced of its Importancē, and desirous to have it for our own Temper?

G. You have God, and Christ, and Heaven, and Scripture in your Mouths; but the Devil is in your Hearts. And there are among you so many different Sects and Opinions, that a Man may sooner lose his Senses by attending to you, than become a good Christian.

M. I wish my *Parishioner* would carefully consider, as we go along, both your Objections, and my Answers; and particularly what you now suggest concerning different Opinions. Certainly our Opinions may differ, when our Religion is the same. Perhaps there are not two Men in the World of the same Opinion in every Thing. A true Christian desireth the Unity, Peace and Concord of all his Brethren in Christ; but as to Opinion, he followeth the Right, as far as he can understand it; but in doubtful Things he carefully avoideth Divisions, Sects, or Parties. Try if all serious Christians do not agree in this, in whatever else they may differ. And since you, Sir, are not against all Religion, permit me to ask what you are against?

G. I am against being *righteous overmuch*, and making Men believe they cannot be saved without such strict Holiness, and thereby driving them out of their Senses. Why not be moderate in Religion, and live as our Neighbours do, and as our Fore-fathers have done?

done? What! Are they all damned? Will you be wiser than all the World? Moderation is good in all Things.

M. To be *righteous overmuch*, in its most obvious Meaning, is to be stricter than God would have us, by devising a Righteousness of our own. A pretended Exactness which is not commanded, is no Duty, but a great Hinderance of Duty. As when the Usefulness of a Sermon is destroyed by the excessive Nicety of its Composition. Or in the Management of Affairs, when too much Attention to trifling Circumstances is productive of Negligence in Things of the greatest Importance. So in Religion, when *Sacrifice* is preferred before *Mercy*.—We desire not to *make Men believe* any Thing but the Word of God. Believing God is the appointed Way to Salvation. And will it save Men to be Unbelievers?—Instead of *driving Men out of their Senses*, we labour to restore them to their right Minds; as when the Prodigal Son *came to himself*, and returned to his Father. We take that Man to be worse than mad, who will sell his Soul for sinful Pleasure. We are no Friends to Melancholy, because it is unfavourable to the joyful Life of a sincere Believer. But we wish Men to have so much Fear of God, and of Sin and Hell, as to keep them in the Way of Holiness and Heaven. To call them from the Life of Brutes, to aspire after an angelical Life, is not the Way to frighten them out of their Wits. *Wisdom is justified of her Children*. Let Self-destroyers despise us, we can bear their Contempt much easier than an offended God, or a guilty Conscience.—As for *Moderation*, we esteem it a valuable Fruit and Effect of Prudence, and we are real Enemies to imprudent and irregular Zeal. But because you imagine, Sir, that a *godly, righteous, and sober Life* is an Excess in Religion, and seem very solicitous, under Pretence of Moderation, to reduce us to a dead Formality, let me intreat you to consider the following Questions. Is it possible to love
God

God too much, to please him too well, and obey him too accurately? Hath God made any Laws that are not fit to be obeyed? Can you give God more than his own, or more true and faithful Service than he deserveth? Are you afraid of doing too much for eternal Life? As you acknowledge we are all Sinners, and come far short of our Duty, when we have done our best, why should we be dissuaded from loving and serving God too much, and with all our Lameness be intreated not to run towards Heaven too fast? Is he sincere, who doth not desire to be perfect; or can he really love Holiness, who doth not desire to be more holy? When we are commanded, *to cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*, did not God know what he said, or are you wiser than God? Is it not the Devil's Work, to call Men away from Holiness, and make them believe that it is, either needless, or too troublesome? Is any Man, when he is dying, troubled with too much Holiness, or too little? Did you ever know any Man so holy and good, as not earnestly to desire to be better? Is not Sin the greatest Plague in the World, and the grand Troubler of Persons and Families, of Churches and Kingdoms? Would it not be happy if there were no Sin, and *the Will of God was done on Earth, as it is done in Heaven*? What have you to mind in this World, that deserveth your greatest Care and Labour, comparable to the pleasing God, and saving your Soul? Do you know any one among those whom you think too religious, that seemeth in loving and serving God to exceed the Zeal and Diligence of the Ungodly in loving and serving Sin? While the Men of the World think and talk, contrive and labour only for worldly Things, have not the Godly a Thousand Times greater Motives to be as early and late, as constant and unwearied, alone or in Company, in thinking and talking of their God and Saviour, and in *working out their own Salvation*? “ O Lord, par
“ don

“ don our Slothfulness in doing so little, and we will
 “ chearfully bear any Reproaches for doing so much!
 “ My God, thou knowest my Heart, if thou wilt but
 “ enable me to believe thy Promises more firmly,
 “ and have more lively Hope of Heaven, and more
 “ fervent Love to thyself, and serve Christ more faith-
 “ fully, and bear the Cross more patiently, I ask for
 “ no higher Reward or Happiness in this World.
 “ Give me this Feast, these Delights, these restless
 “ Labours, and let deluded Sinners catch their Sha-
 “ dows, and despise me as foolish or mad! Thou art
 “ my Portion, my First and Last, my only Trust, my
 “ eternal All! O leave me not to a disaffected, life-
 “ less, unholy and unbelieving Heart, to a carnal,
 “ worldly, selfish Mind, to live and die a stranger
 “ to my God, my Saviour, and the Church tri-
 “ umphant in heavenly Glory; and then I will never
 “ join with the Accusers of thy *reasonable* and de-
 “ lightful *Service*, nor ask one Taste of Sin’s deceit-
 “ ful Pleasures!”

G. Here is Rapture and Enthusiasm!—But when
 you have done all, pray, Sir, who made the Way to
 Heaven so long? Why lead you the People so far
 about? What need is there of so many Sermons and
 Prayers, as if God were moved with our Talk? I can
 say all in these three Words, *Think well, say well,*
and do well.

M. Indeed, Sir, it is quickly said; and if rightly
 understood, it is that only to which I have been per-
 suading your *Tenant*, and which you have all this
 while been opposing. Let us but faithfully labour to
think, say, and do well, and sincerely repent that ever
 we thought, said, or did otherwise, and trust in Christ
 for Pardon and Help, and then we are perfectly a-
 greed. But there is a wide Difference between *Well*
 and *Ill*. That only is *Well*, which God commandeth,
 whether we approve it or not. Though Sermons and
 Prayers are not to move God, yet we need them, and
 many of them, to move ourselves. Holy Desires in
 Prayer

Prayer are excited by Exercise. What can be more reasonable than *Ask* and *Have*. He that doth not value Mercy, will neither relish it well, nor use it well. There is an admirable Co-operation between the Grace of God, and our holy and importunate Desires. Like the Concurrence of Light with the Eye in producing Light; we are receiving Grace as long as we are desiring it. Besides, Prayer is Part of the Homage we owe to the great Benefactor of the World. God made all Things for himself, and especially our rational Powers. Can our Thoughts, Affections, or Words be employed on a nobler Theme, than our blessed Saviour, our glorious God, our heavenly Joys? Why should such Work be ever counted a Weariness? Would you have us be afraid of Heaven, as if it were a House of Correction? If you can feast and game, see Plays, and read Romances, and never think the Time long, excuse us in our numerous Sermons and Prayers. Sir, the worst I wish you, is, that you had felt but one Hour, what some of God's People have enjoyed in hearing of their glorious Lord, and in praying to him, and praising him.

G. It hath ever been the Custom of Hypocrites to place all their Religion in Words and Looks; but where are your good Works? You are as covetous as any Men in the World.

M. Our Doctrine is, to love our Neighbour as ourselves, to honour God with our Substance, and devote all we have to him; that we are created in Christ Jesus to good Works, and must do good to all Men, especially to the Household of Faith; that whatever we do or deny to the Members of Christ, is done or denied to Christ himself; and that we must not forget to do good and communicate, for with such Sacrifices God is well-pleased. We judge it necessary to labour in our Callings, that we may have to give to him that needeth; and, as the Stewards of God, not to waste our Lord's Goods in Sensuality or Superfluity, but to feed, clothe, and

and instruct the Poor, and have our Accounts always ready.

G. These are good Words, but where are the Deeds?

M. If Men live not as they profess, blame not their Profession, but their Lives. He that liveth contrary to his Profession, tormenteth his own Conscience, and publisheth his own Shame. Whenever I have made a Collection for any real Work of Charity, I have observed the Devout and Religious have contributed much more freely and largely in Proportion to their Substance, than Others. Though, I doubt not, some Men have much Liberality, while they have but little Religion. And while you plead for good Works, Sir, I beseech you to consider what your own Works are, and how they will appear at the great Day. Your's will be a dreadful Account, if it should then be found, that you lavished away your Thousands on Horses, Dogs, and Sports, and in various Forms of Pride and Pomp, of Luxury and Debauchery; while very little was employed for pious and charitable Purposes. God grant it may never be said of you, *Cast ye the unprofitable Servant into outer Darknes!*—

G. I will talk no longer with you. You think to make me tremble with *Felix*, by this Face of Reason which you put on your Religion.

M. Sir, had you denied the *Scripture*, or the *Life to come*, or the *Immortality of the Soul*, I would have reasoned with you in a different Manner. But as you profess yourself a Christian, I beg Leave to ask this one Question, whether, supposing your *Tenant* had never been baptized, you would now advise him to it or not?

G. Do you think I would not have him a Christian?

M. And would you have him understand the Nature of the Baptismal-Engagement?

G. I would have him behave like a Man.

D

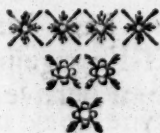
M. And

M. And would you have him serious and sincere in this great Affair?

G. Do you think I am for making a Jest of Christianity, or for dissembling in it?

M. Come then, my *Parishioner*, observe what your *Landlord* would have you do, and I desire no more; for we are agreed concerning your Duty. With Understanding and Seriousness renew your Baptismal Covenant, and faithfully keep it. But for your better Assistance I here give it you in Writing, that you may take it Home with you, and consider it carefully, and come to a deliberate and stedfast Resolution. I will just read it, that your *Landlord* may object, if there be any Thing in it that displeaseth him.—“ I do believe in God the Father, Son, and
 “ Holy Spirit; and heartily repenting of my sinful
 “ Life, I desire now to give up myself, with all my
 “ Heart and Soul, to my reconciled God and Father,
 “ my Saviour and Lord, my Sanctifier and Com-
 “ forter; renouncing the Devil, the World, and the
 “ sinful Desires of the Flesh; taking up my Cross,
 “ and denying myself, and following Christ even to
 “ Death, that I may live with him in heavenly
 “ Glory.”

G. I cannot object against any Thing you have read without objecting to Christianity itself. God make us all better Christians; for I perceive we are not what we promised to be. I have been opposing you all this While, but I find my Heart is against *Practical Christianity*. I wish I had not talked with you; for you have disquieted my Mind. *Serious Religion* is necessary. But if I must repent, there is no Haste.





DIALOGUE IV.

The Minister hath the Pleasure to see his Parishioner resolved for a Life of serious Godliness.

Minister. WELCOME, Neighbour, I expected to see you long ago; what hath hindered you?

Parishioner. O! Sir, I have been greatly afflicted. We had a violent Fever among us. My *Landlord*, Sir E—— D——, is dead, and so is the Servant that waited upon him here, when you talked with him.

M. I am very sorry to hear it. Pray how did the *Gentleman* relish our Talk, and what was his Temper of Mind on a Death-Bed?

P. He told me you were too free with him, but he thought you honest, and that you had more to say for your Religion than he expected. He acknowledged you had Scripture on your Side. He expressed a greater Liking to the *Papists*, because, he said, they did not regard the Scripture so much, and when a Man hath sinned, if he confesses to the Priest, they absolve him. Rather than believe that none but such godly People could be saved, and rather than live so strict a Life, he seemed willing to think the Scripture was not the Word of God.

M. It is melancholy to see how the Heart of Man rebelleth against the Law and Grace of God! As for the *Papists*, I assure you they confess all the Scriptures to be the Word of God, nor will they deny

any Thing I have urged upon you. Indeed they take some Books into the Canon of Scripture which we think *Apocryphal*, and also add a great Deal more, which they call *Tradition*, consisting so much in Words and *bodily Exercise*, that the Enemies of strict Godliness very easily turn *Papists*. They allow their *Absolutions* are not effectual without true Repentance. And when their *Priests* flatter the Presumption and false Hopes of gross Sinners, by absolving them as often as they confess their Sins, it is but to answer their own covetous Designs. On the whole, I cannot see how a Man that truly believeth the Scripture, can allow himself in a Life of Ungodliness; for his Belief must, either convert, or torment him.

P. I am sure my *Landlord* had some Convictions upon his Conscience, which greatly troubled him. When he was first taken ill, every Body told him there was no Danger; and so he was kept from talking about his Soul and Eternity, till the Fever took away his Senses. Twice or thrice he came to himself, and then his *Chaplain* advised him to lift up his Heart to God, and believe in Christ, for he was going to a Place of Joy, and Angels were ready to receive his Soul. But Sir *E—— D——* looked at him with a dreadful Countenance, and said, “A— way Flatterer, you have betrayed my Soul. Too late! Too late!” And he trembled so much that the Bed shook under him.

M. How did his Servant die?

P. O quite in another Manner! He heard in the next Room all the Talk between his Master and you, and no Doubt was convinced: But he went on in his former Course till his Sickness, and then was in great Terror, especially when he heard of his Master’s Death. He often talked of you, and wished to see you, but Nobody would hear of sending for you. Methinks I still hear how he cried out, “O my Madnes! O my sinful Life! What will become of my miserable Soul? O that I had again the Time

“ I

"I have lost! Would God but try me once more, I would lead a new Life, and despise all the Scoffs of Fools, and all the Temptations of the World."

M. And what hath been your own Temper of Mind since I saw you, and how did your Master's Conversation with me affect you?

P. I bless God I heard it. 'Till you answered him, I thought the Revilers of Godliness had some Sense in what they said. But I soon saw their Folly.

M. It must be Folly to talk against the Wisdom of God, and his holy Word, and against the Interest and Happiness of our own Souls.

P. I could not remain any longer in Doubt, when he was obliged to submit to your Argument.

M. What have you since resolved upon?

P. I went Home convinced that I must become a *new Creature*, or be undone. I read over again and again the Baptismal Covenant, which you were so kind as to write for me. I often conversed with that pious Neighbour you mentioned to me, and I am thankful for the Help he afforded me. But after all, my worldly Business, my Family-Cares, the Temptations of my old Acquaintance, and my Fondness for sinful Pleasures, together with my Ignorance of divine Things, made me delay my Repentance. Then the Fever seized me, and carried off Sir E—— D—— and his Servant, and I became resolute to delay no longer.

M. O how unreasonable to delay when you are once convinced! What! delay to fly from the Guilt of Sin, the Bondage of the Devil, and the Wrath of God! How brittle is our mortal Frame, and how wonderful that we live! Is the State of a Sinner so safe or happy, that any should be unwilling to leave it? Are God, and Christ, and Heaven so bad, that any should delay to be godly? Can you too soon be a Child of God, and escape Damnation? How do you know but the Spirit of God may leave you to the Counsel of your own Will? Doth not every sinful

Delay grieve the Spirit, harden your own Heart, and make your Conversion more difficult? Would you a little longer despise and injure a precious Saviour, and a little longer please the Devil? Will you kindle a greater Flame in your House, before you quench it? Will you give yourself a few more Stabs, before you go to the Physician? Believe it, Satan doth not trifle; Time standeth not still; nor do Sun or Moon or any of the Creatures delay to serve you. God needeth not you, but you need him. You would not have God delay to help you in your extreme Pain and Sicknefs. But divine Patience will not be abused for ever. *Behold, now is the accepted Time! Behold, now is the Day of Salvation!*

P. Sir, I thank you for shewing me the Sin and Danger of Delays. But I was telling you how God hath already determined me, I hope, against delaying any longer. When I thought my Death was near, then all my Sins, and all your Counsels came into my Mind, and I was overwhelmed with the Fear of God's Displeasure. I thought I had but a few Days to be out of Hell. And O! what would I have given for Assurance of Pardon through Jesus Christ, and for a little more Time to prepare for Eternity? Never till then did I so thoroughly see the Evil of Sin, the Wrath of God, my Need of a Saviour, the Worth of Time, and the Folly of Delays. Now, Sir, as God hath mercifully raised me up from a Bed of Sicknefs, I am come to tell you my Resolution, and ask your further Advice.

M. Afflictions are not the least of God's Mercies. His Rod is kindly added to his Word, to fix our Attention, and soften our Hearts.—I must again advise you, carefully to consider, and clearly to understand, your Baptismal Covenant.

P. Suffer me then to mention some of my Doubts, which seem to perplex and hinder my covenanting with God. And, first, what must I trust to for the Pardon

Pardon of Sin, and which Way, and on what Terms, may I be sure of it?

M. Trust to the Sacrifice and Righteousness of Christ alone, which the Mercy of God hath made the meritorious Cause of your Forgiveness and Acceptance, your Sanctification and Salvation. Give up yourself to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the Covenant of Baptism, repenting of Sin, and turning to God by Jesus Christ. If you do so, God surely giveth you a Right and Title to Christ, and to all the Blessings of Grace now, and Glory for ever.

P. I have been a great Sinner. I neglected my Soul, prophaned the Lord's Day, was a Drunkard, a Fornicator, and even a Thief; for when I was a Servant, I wronged my Master. And may all my Sins be pardoned, though they have been so many and so great?

M. All Sins are pardoned to the sincerely penitent and believing Soul. But no Sin is pardoned, where there is no true Repentance and Faith. A sincere Christian need not doubt of the Pardon of his past Sins.

P. I fear I shall sin again, and how must I get Pardon in Time to come? I have heard that Baptism washeth away all Sins; but though I was long ago baptised, I am yet very imperfect.

M. Baptism is said to *wash away Sin*, as it containeth that Covenant of God, which secureth Pardon for all Sin, through the Blood of Christ, to all that sincerely repent and believe. If any be ungodly after Baptism, they are by the same Covenant freely forgiven, whenever they turn to God by Repentance and Faith.

P. How must I obtain Grace and Strength to keep my Covenant-Engagements?

M. You must not only go to God through Christ for pardoning Mercy, but also to *find Grace to help in Time of Need. Without Christ you can do Nothing.*

But you can do all Things through Christ strengthening you, by his Spirit given unto you, and dwelling in your Heart by Faith. The Holy Spirit will enlighten your Understanding, renew your Will and Affections, and animate your whole Soul with heavenly Love; and therefore you must cherish his Motions, and not resist, or grieve him.

P. What must I do to get, to keep, and to obey the Holy Spirit, and thereby enjoy the Blessings communicated by him?

M. Ever remember, that the giving or denying the Aids of the Spirit to our Souls, are the greatest Rewards or Punishments administered by Christ in the present World. Therefore wait on the Lord Jesus Christ in the daily Exercise of Faith, and the humble and diligent Use of all the Ordinances of divine Worship, which Christ hath appointed.

P. But I am afraid, I have been guilty of that Sin against the Holy Spirit, which is unpardonable. For I have prophanely derided the Spirit and its Motions and Influences, and those who pleaded for them.

M. Every Sin against the Holy Spirit is not unpardonable? but only the Blasphemy of Infidels, who, when they cannot deny the Miracles of Christ, maintain that he wrought them by the Power of the Devil. So that the unpardonable Sin belongeth to none but Infidels, and to but few of them.

P. How may I know that I have the Spirit, so as to distinguish his Influences from Delusions and Fancies.

M. You may be assured that the Influences of the Holy Spirit of God will only lead to God and Holiness, always agreeing with the Word of God, and producing in us the Knowledge, Life and Love of God.

P. May I venture to covenant with God, when I am very uncertain whether or no my Heart be sincere?

M. It

M. It is necessary to your Salvation to be sincere, but not to know your own Sincerity. All that God expecteth from us in our Engagements with him, is, that we speak our own Minds, according to the best Self-Acquaintance we can get; otherwise a great Part of our Worship must be omitted for Want of knowing the Sincerity of our own Hearts.

P. What if my Heart should not be sincere, and I should afterward fall away?

M. If your Heart in covenanting with God be insincere, you will continue in your Sin and Misery without Pardon and Acceptance till you have sincerity. If you fall into any particular Sin, you must be restored again by repenting and believing, as if you had never repented and believed before. But, as you love God and your own Soul, take Heed of wilful and presumptuous Sins.

P. I am greatly afraid I shall be overcome by Temptations. My Heart is so deceitful, and I am so much intangled with bad Company, and many worldly Snares, that, though I am now resolved, I fear my Resolutions will all be broken.

M. You must fear it, in Order to prevent it. But this Fear should not hinder your Covenant-Engagements. You know Sin is odious, and its Pleasures deceitful and poisonous, and that Nothing in this World is worthy to rival God, and Christ, and your own Salvation. Never dream of joining Sin and Holiness, or of having your Heart divided between Earth and Heaven, between God and Mammon; for that is the damning Self-Deceit of Hypocrites. God will have you renounce the World, as your Portion and Happiness; and at the same Time he will give it you, as your daily Provision for his Service, and a blessed Means of promoting your Salvation. And it is Blessedness indeed, to see God in every Creature-Comfort, and sincerely thank him for it, and faithfully employ it in his Service. A few Pence thus improved, will be better than Thousands of

Pounds, abused in *serviug divers Lusts and Pleasures*. You will experience greater Pleasures in the Service of God, which will enable you to hate what you formerly loved. You will have the Example and Converse of God's People to direct and animate you, and abundant Help from all his holy Ordinances. You will especially be planted into Christ, and *receive of his Spirit, and his Grace will be sufficient for you, for his Strength will be made perfect in your Weakness*. Your Resolution is absolutely necessary. You must resolve, or perish for ever. You must chuse God and Christ, Holiness and Heaven, *rather than enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season*. There is no Medium. It is impossible to reconcile both together. What Folly, Sin, and Shame, that in so great, so necessary, so plain a Case you should be unresolved to this Day! That you should live twenty Years, as if you were resolved to be damned; and after that stay so long before you can determine, whether it is best to be saved or not! What! Is it yet a difficult Question, whether God or the Devil be the better Friend, Master and Owner? Whether Heaven or Hell be the better Dwelling? Whether Sin or Holiness be the better Life? Whether or no you should consent to have Christ and the Spirit save you from your Guilt and Pollution? Till you firmly resolve, you are not a Christian indeed.

P. But I have so long been accustomed to a vain careless Life, that I fear I shall soon be weary of strict Godliness, and shall never be able to hold out.

M. I tell you again, if you conceive of the Life you must turn to, as melancholy and burthensome, you are mistaken. There is no Life in the World so safe, honourable, and profitable, or that yieldeth such manly Pleasure. Your repenting of Sin with shame and godly Sorrow, only fitteth you for the Comforts of pardoning and healing Grace. Your Faith will be fixed on precious Promises, on the Love of Christ in his Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension

Ascension into heavenly Glory; on the certainty and gracious Constitution of his Covenant; on the Love of the Father in giving us his Son, in reconciling us to himself, in adopting us into his Family, in making us his Treasure, and in bestowing upon us his Holy Spirit. You will always live under the sanctifying and comforting Influences of the Spirit of God, drawing you near to God, making you more like God, and helping your Infirmities in every Duty and against every Temptation. You will have lively Hopes and Desires after eternal Happiness, and the Sight of the Glory of God, and Christ, with all the glorious Company of Saints and Angels, and of having your own Body and Soul made meet for perfect and eternal Love and Praise. In all your Afflictions, or Persecutions, and even in Death itself, you will have divine Comforts, and the Hopes of Glory, for your constant Cordials; so that while Others fear Death for Fear of Hell, you will bid it welcome, as the Gate of Heaven, and an Entrance on your everlasting Rest. You will live in the Communion of Saints, where all your Graces and Comforts will have a rich Supply from Ordinances of divine Worship; where you will delightfully hear the glad Tidings of the Gospel, fervently pray for more Grace, joyfully give Thanks for innumerable Mercies, be elevated in the Praises of God, feast on your Saviour's Flesh and Blood, and often be renewing your Covenant, and receiving the fresh Seals of Forgiveness, and new Degrees of spiritual Life, and Strength, and Joy. What is there in all this, that a Man should be afraid or weary of it? Is not this *Godliness*? And is it not *profitable unto all Things, having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come*?

P. You tell me of another Kind of Godliness than I thought of; for I was afraid of its being a melancholy Life, as I saw it to be so in many that professed it.

M. I have already told you the Reasons why some are melancholy. Indeed there are many, who, in the Beginning of their Conversion, stifle their Convictions, instead of freely disclosing them, and thereby prevent their own Instruction and Consolation.

P. I desire to be thankful for the Grace of God, and for your good Advice. I am firmly resolved to *join myself to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgotten.*

M. I will go Home with you to your House, and try whether you and I can instruct all your Family, and bring them to the same Resolution. Certainly it is your Duty to endeavour it, and you may make the Attempt the more chearfully, because God hath often blessed his penitent and believing Servants with the Conversion also of their Households, as in the Families of *Cornelius the Roman Centurion, Lydia, and the Jaylor at Philippi*, and many Others. It will be a great Mercy to you, if God give you a Family willing to go along with you in the Way to Heaven, and daily joining with you in his Worship and Fear. Then your House will indeed be a Part of God's Family, and be under his special Protection and Blessing at all Times.——

P. O! Sir, I bless God that *this Day Salvation is come to my House*. In the Presence of my Family I lament my sinful Life, and desire and resolve henceforward to engage myself and them to be the Lord's in all new and holy Obedience.—But, Sir, is there any Thing else you would now advise me to?

M. I would have you take the first Opportunity of receiving the *Lord's-Supper*, as a publick Renewal of your Baptismal Covenant. And do your utmost to evidence to your Fellow-Communicants, by all your Temper and Conversation, your sincere Repentance for your past sinful Life, your earnest Desire of their Prayers for you, and tender Watchfulness over you, your Willingness to receive their faithful Admonitions, and your ardent Concern to glorify God by
warning

warning Others to take Heed of violating their solemn Covenant-Vows, both in Baptism, and at the Lord's-Table.

P. I shall be glad to be admitted to such publick Communion; but I fear it will not be attended with all the Fruits you mention, nor do I perceive that all these Fruits are necessary.

M. They that *were baptized by John, confessed their Sins.* They that *were pricked in their Heart, on the Day of Pentecost,* cried out, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* Other Converts *confessed, and shewed their Deeds* publickly, and to their no small Expence. You were publickly baptized, and have as publickly sinned against that Covenant, and therefore you should make your Repentance also publick. You are obliged to honour God, and should do it as publickly, as you have ever dishonoured him. Sin hath shamefully deceived and defiled you, and why should not your Repentance for it be expressed with open Shame? You have encouraged Others to Sin, and led them in the Way to Hell, and why should you not now labour to undo the Hurt you have done by telling them how Sin deceived you, and beseeching them to repent with you, as they sinned with you? Serious Christians were grieved with your past Profaneness and Impiety, and the more manifest your Conversion is, the greater will be their rejoicing for you, and their Love to you. You yourself will have the more abundant Comfort, in Proportion to the clearer Proofs of your own Sincerity, not only in the secret, but the publick Fruits and Effects of your Faith and Repentance.

P. You have said more to satisfy me on this Head, than I could ever have imagined. But do you mean this of every Person that partaketh of the *Lord's-Supper?*

M. I acknowledge there are some, whose Piety began in Childhood, who by undiscerned Degrees have advanced in a divine Life, and have never openly violated

violated their Baptismal Covenant, though chargeable with secret Sins, for which they have had secret and sincere Repentance. The more distinguishing your Case is, your Fellow-Communicants will be so much the more frequent and fervent in praying for your Confirmation and Perseverance, and that you *may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things*, by living as a Member of Christ, in the Communion of Saints, and no more return to your ungodly sinful Life.—As soon as you please, I shall be glad to see you again, and to give you any further Assistance, as God shall enable me. In the mean Time, you may do as the noble *Æthiopian* Convert did, *go on your Way rejoicing* in this, that you are united to Christ, and are justified in the Sight of God from all your former Sins, and are sincerely engaged in the Covenant of God, being *no more a Stranger and Foreigner, but a Fellow-Citizen with the Saints, and of the Household of God, even an Heir of God, and joint Heir with Christ, according to the Hope of eternal Life.*



DIALOGUE V.

The Minister guardeth his Parishioner against the Temptations he will meet with in his Attachment to serious Godliness.

Minister. **M**Y good Neighbour, how is it now?
 Parishioner. O! dear Sir, since I repented, and both privately and publickly gave up myself to my God, and Saviour, and Sanctifier, I
 find

find myself, as it were in a new World. I have already had more Comfort in seeking God, than ever I had in all the Pleasures of Sin. It grieveth me, that I should spend so much of my Life in Wickedness. I am ashamed, that such foolish Trifles should keep my Heart so long from Christ and Holiness. O that I had lived all my Time in Poverty or Slavery, rather than in abominable Lusts! Had I not now a merciful God, an all-sufficient Saviour, a divine Comforter, and a Covenant of Grace, what should I do? I am amazed to think of the dangerous State I was in so long! What would have become of me, if God had cut me off in my Sins? O that I had sooner turned to God and Holiness! But *my Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. For where Sin abounded, Grace hath much more abounded.*

M. Blessed be God, for the Taste you have had of his Goodness. But it is comparatively small to what, I trust, you shall have in due Time. You are indeed entered upon the happiest Life in the World. Yet I must tell you, the Christian Life is in Scripture expressly called *a Race, and a Warfare*. They are the Conquerors, who *have fought a good Fight*. They are crowned with Glory, who *press towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*. Be not therefore surprized, or intimidated, while I point out to you the Temptations you are likely to meet with. I assure you, I have no other Design, but to put you upon your Guard, that you may escape every Snare, and overcome in every Conflict.

P. I have already found your Advice so good, that I am persuaded you will farther suggest to me what I most need. And as I am yet in a tempting World, I have a great Desire to know my particular Dangers.

M. It is highly probable your *first* Danger will arise from *doubting your own Sincerity*. You may be tempted to think, your Conversion was not true, because you had no more Brokenness of Heart for Sin;

or

or because you could not determine the exact Time when you was converted. Satan may lead you to conclude, that all Religion consisteth in weeping and mourning; or that you have no Grace, because you have not such a lively Sense of Things invisible, as of Things that are seen; or because you sometimes think and talk of the World, and not always of God, and Christ, and Heaven; or because you are not employed in Meditation and Prayer beyond your real Opportunities and Capacities. Thus the Enemy of Souls will labour, by mistaken Doubts and Fears, to make you melancholy; and will often tell you, all your Religion hath been Hypocrisy, that none of your Sins are forgiven, that you shall certainly go to Hell, that God is your Enemy, that Christ himself hath *cast you out*, that you have sinned against the Holy Spirit, and that the Day of Grace is gone from you. In all this he will have the greater Advantage against you, because the full Discovery of your Sincerity requireth much Self-Acquaintance, and a very diligent Use of the Means which God hath appointed and provided.

P. This is the more likely to happen, because I feel some Beginnings of it already; but what must I do to prevent it?

M. Be ever attentive to your Baptismal Covenant, so as thoroughly to understand the Nature of it, and go no farther for Evidences of your Conversion, than to your renewing of that Covenant by renewed Acts of Repentance and Faith. Instead of tedious Methods of trying yourself, rather engage heartily and without Delay in your well-known Duty; study to please God, and *abound in the Fruits of Righteousness*; resolve most against the very Sins which make you question your Sincerity; and by labouring to grow in Grace, and in the practical Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, you will have the Witness in yourself, that you are born of God.

P. I

P. I thank you, Sir, for this short and full Direction. Please to mention another Danger.

M. *Next* to doubting your own Sincerity, you will perhaps find yourself tempted to the opposite extreme of *Security*. Satan will not fail to tell you, now you are converted, all is sure; you have Nothing to fear; having true Grace, you can never lose it; being once pardoned, you can never be unpardoned. If he can thus take away all your Fear and Carefulness, he will soon destroy your Zeal and Diligence.

P. I thought I had now no more Need to fear.

M. So far as *Fear hath Torment* you should resist it; but you will need, as long as you live, that Kind of Fear which leadeth to Repentance and christian Watchfulness. You will always be exposed to Satan's Rage, to the Snares of Prosperity and Adversity, and to many inbred Lusts and Corruptions. You promise in the Covenant; but who is rewarded for mere Promises? When a Soldier is listed, he must also watch and fight. We must not only *believe that God is*, but *that he is a Re-warder of them that diligently seek him*. If *we receive a Kingdom which cannot be moved*, we must have Grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with Reverence and godly Fear; for our God is a consuming Fire. Though it is God which worketh in us, both to will, and to do; yet we must work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling. Christ doth not take us into his Army, Vineyard and Family to be careless and slothful. By Faith, Noah, being warned of God of Things not seen as yet, moved with Fear, prepared an Ark to the saving of his House; by which he condemned the World, and became Heir of the Righteousness which is by Faith. Let us therefore fear, lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.

P. I perceive I shall always need to be afraid of falling into Security. *Happy is the Man that in this Respect feareth always!*

M. But

M. But remember this; your most dangerous Temptation will be to *Sensuality, Pride, and Covetousness*. He that seriously thinketh on the Grave, and the awful Change which is there made in all the Comeliness of mortal Flesh, and how short and precarious our Life is, and what a dreadful Thing it will be, for a Soul to appear before a holy God under the Guilt and Defilement of such abominable Lusts, will, one should hope, be determined to pray and strive, with all his Might, to *use this World, as not abusing it*. Therefore *love not the World, neither the Things that are in the World*. If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World. And the World passeth away, and the Lust thereof; but he that doth the Will of God, abiaeth for ever.

P. I even tremble to think of the Temptation you are speaking of, because I have been so much under its Power; and, considering the Deceitfulness of my Heart, have too much Reason to fear, least all my Faith and Prayer, all my Self-Denial and Mortification, should not be sufficient.

M. Your lively Sense of this Danger, and your proposing to yourself the best Means for preventing it, remindeth me of a Story commonly told of a great Courtier, who was not long ago riding near *Islington*, and happening to see a Man that had just then hanged himself, had him cut down, soon enough to recover him, and on Examination finding that he hanged himself for Love, as Lust is very improperly named, he ordered him to *Bridewell*, to hard Labour, and scanty Provision. After some Time the Man was cured of Love, and came to the noble Lord, to thank him, both for saving his Life, and rectifying his disordered Mind.

P. I beg, Sir, you will proceed to other Temptations, if you have more to mention.

M. There

M. There will be no Impropriety, if I observe to you, that you will meet with much Difficulty from the *unhappy Spirit of Controversy* in the christian World. Among the different Sects and Parties of Protestants, you will find opposite Ways of expressing their Sentiments on every important Truth of the Gospel, as well as on the far less important Concerns of Church-Government, and particular Modes of Worship. In Consequence of these Differences, you will hear a Variety of dividing and distinguishing Names. What is worst of all, you will see every Party so fond of its own Peculiarities, as to treat all Others with Indifference and Neglect, and too often with Contempt and Abhorrence, and with all the Madness and Rage of Oppression and Persecution.

P. This is very unexpected, and very perplexing to me! Is Religion so uncertain a Thing? Or are Christians no wiser and better, than to live in Contention and Confusion? I thought their Warfare had been only against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and not against each other. I am utterly discouraged at this News.

M. I had rather you knew this before-Hand, and be prepared for it, that when you find it a Reality, you may in some Measure prevent its pernicious Influence on your own Temper and Conduct. All that in Christianity, without which a Man cannot be saved, is very plain and easy. To repent and believe, to love God above all, and Heaven more than Earth, and your Neighbour as yourself, to subdue fleshly Lusts, and deny yourself, and love your Enemies; these, and many other Doctrines, are harder to be practised, than to be understood. But there are too many, whose Christianity is altogether hypocritical and worldly, as yours was before your Conversion. They are sure to concur with those Opinions and Parties, which contribute most to their Reputation and secular Interest, and therefore they oppose with Violence whatever seemeth to be inconsistent

sistent with their worldly Views, and are thereby rendered the greatest Troublers of the Churches, and Persecutors of good Men. Even among those that are sincerely devoted to God, there are too many Instances of lamentable Imperfection; either they are very defective in their Knowledge and Experience, and too confident of the Rectitude of their first Apprehensions of divine Truths; or they are so weak in Grace, as to have great Remainders of unmortified Pride, Passion, and Selfishness; and by this Means it is no Wonder if the Peace and Harmony of religious Society is too often interrupted. Now, in your first Conversion, you are apt to think true Christians much nearer Perfection than they really are. Alas! The Godly have in them too little of real Godliness. When you have tried them longer, you will find their Graces scanty, their Faults many, and very hard to be cured, and that they are yet but *Men*.

P. If I find them as bad as you intimate, how shall I be able to love them as Brethren?

M. Amidst all their Faults you may still discern the Worth and Excellency of real Godliness, and by observing the Mixture of good and bad in their Characters, you may learn many profitable Lessons. It may enlarge your Ideas of the Mercy of God in bearing with so many Defects in the very best of his Servants. It may convince you of your constant Need of a Saviour and Sanctifier, and how intirely you should live upon the Grace of Christ. It may shew you, how bad your Condition was before Conversion, and how miserable you would have been, if God had left you to yourself—and what an excellent Thing divine Grace is, that not only liveth amidst so much Corruption, but maintaineth the Conflict, till it finally obtain a compleat Triumph. It may teach you to be very tender in judging Others for their Infirmities, and to exercise much Forbearance with them in Love, and to abhor a persecuting Spirit.

Spirit. It may cherish your Hope and Comfort, that your penitent and sin burthened Soul shall have Pardon and eternal Salvation, while you see how much God graciously beareth with, and pardoneth in, all his People. It may render more detestable every Appearance of Pride, Security, and Sloth in yourself, while you have still so much Sin to overcome. It may preserve you from despising the Unconverted or Backsliders, and excite you rather to pity and pray for them; and may the more endear to you such Christians, whom you find eminent for Wisdom and Piety, and a patient, prudent and peaceable Temper. It may remind you of the wide Difference between Earth and Heaven, and make you more earnest in Prayer, that *the Will of God may be done on Earth, as it is done in Heaven*. It may also fill you with ardent Longings for that better World, where holy Souls shall perfectly harmonize in one Flame of Love to God and Christ, and where Sin and Ignorance, Pride and Passion, Oppression and Persecution shall never trouble the Church triumphant.

P. O how great a Privilege is a wise and seasonable Monitor and Guide! I was ready to think ill of the Godly, and even of Godliness itself; but you have given me the best Correction.

M. To think ill of Christ or Christianity, of God or Godliness, for the Faults of any Men in the World, is very disingenuous. What is every Degree of Sin, but the Want of Godliness? And is Health the less valuable, because many are sick? Or Ease, because many are in pain? Or Light, because many are blind? Is any one in the World so much against all Sin, as God is? He forbiddeth it. He gave his Son to die for it. He chastiseth it in the Godly. He casteth impenitent Sinners into Hell. He for ever excludeth Sin out of his heavenly Kingdom.

P. But could not God make Men better? Why then is the World so bad?

M. It

M. It is true, God could make every Man an Angel, and every wicked Man a Saint. But it pleaseth him to do otherwise, and he well knoweth why. Only this we know, that Nothing can undo Men, if they do not wilfully, obstinately, and impenitently refuse the Mercy which God offereth them.

P. You have now brought to my Mind and have almost answered another Temptation, which I have myself sometimes felt, to *think it inconsistent with the Goodness of God to torment such Multitudes in Hell.* When Scripture saith, *few are saved*, it is but the same as saying, *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* Comparatively few are holy. And if God save but few, where is the Abundance of his Mercy?

M. Though God is perfectly good and merciful, yet it is certain there is much Pain and Misery upon Earth, even where there is no Sin, as in Brutes; and doth not a sinful Creature deserve to feel more Misery than one that is innocent? Is it not the Nature of God to hate Sin? Is it not the Nature of Sin to fill the Mind of the Sinner with Vexation and Anguish? If an immortal Soul hath cast off God and Holiness, and kindled in itself the Fire of Hell by its self-tormenting Lusts and Passions, how can this Fire ever be quenched? Though God once pitied his Enemies, and redeemed them, is he obliged to interpose, and save the final Enemies of his Grace, when the Season of Grace is past? If all this Damnation be not only deserved, but executed by Sinners upon themselves, why should God be accused of Cruelty against such cruel and obstinate Self-Destroyers? And if human Government is necessary, must not the Laws and Justice of God be more necessary?

P. You have silenced my murmuring Thoughts. But since there are so many Scandals in the Churches, and such Multitudes that are wicked and miserable, as you have been shewing me, how may I be kept safe?

M. Re-

M. Remember that all this is no more than Christ himself foretold, as a Warning to his Disciples. *There shall arise, saith he, false Christs, and false Prophets, who shall deceive, if it were possible, the very Elect. If any Man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or there; believe it not. Also of your own selves, said an Apostle, shall Men arise, speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them. There must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest. Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light; his Ministers also are transformed as the Ministers of Righteousness; whose End shall be according to their Works. Some cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which they have learned. They that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly, and by good Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple.* How early did Christians shew themselves to be carnal, and walk as Men? While one said, *I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; were they not carnal? Paul was afraid of the Christians in Galatia, lest he had bestowed upon them Labour in vain.* And how many were there in the Churches, to which Christ writ, *who held the Doctrine he hated?*—In Order to your own Safety, I would advise you, to keep close to your Baptismal Covenant, and reject whatever is contrary to it; for it is your Christianity, and containeth the Truths in which all Christians are agreed. Try all Doctrines by holy Scripture, as the only infallible Rule. Love and practise Holiness, and your Knowledge will thereby become experimental, and your Heart will be established with Grace. Lean not to your own Understanding, but be always humble and teachable. And be sure to pray constantly and earnestly for divine Teaching, and that God will guide you by his Spirit into all Truth, even the Truth as it is in Jesus. Thus your Way will be made plain before you.

P. In-

P. Indeed, Sir, you have made that easy, which seemed to be very difficult, and where I expected to have been quite bewildered. I hope any other Difficulties you are to mention, will be made as plain.

M. It will be requisite to caution you against *mind-
ing some Parts of Christianity, so as to overlook the rest.* Under the Influence of this Temptation, if it may be so called, you may perhaps be wholly attentive to Duty, but negligent of Grace and Mercy; or magnify Grace, while you set light by holy Duties, and the Cultivation of your inward Temper. It is too common a Mistake, to separate what God hath united, and oppose one Truth or Duty to another, instead of making one happily subservient to the other. O how happy would it be for every serious Christian, so far to mourn for Sin, as to magnify pardoning Grace, and renew and sanctify the Heart and Life! And so to contemplate the wonderful Love of God in Christ, and the Greatness and Certainty of heavenly Glory, as to live in constant joyful Love and Praise to our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier! And, animated by Love to God and Man, to delight in persevering Obedience to God, and in *doing good to all Men, especially to them that are of the Household of Faith!* This is true Religion. In this, weeping for Sin, and attending on any appointed Worship, would not be neglected; only these would be considered as lower Steps in the divine Life, and chiefly valuable for leading to those that are higher and nobler.

P. I am very thankful for this Caution. I perceive it is a very pleasant Thing to be truly religious. But I fear many good People are low in their Attainments.

M. You will also need to be as much cautioned against *Coldness and Formality in Religion*, and thereby suffering all your spiritual Vigor to die away into a lifeless Image, and an empty Name.

P. And what shall I do to prevent it?

M. Let

M. Let your first and chief Labour every Day be with your own Heart, to stir it up to a holy Activity. Sit under the most searching and animating Ministrations, read the most serious Books, and converse much with lively Christians. Watch against that Zeal which spendeth itself in Disputes and Contentions for Opinions and Parties. Fly from the chilling Air of Love to this World. Take Heed of wilful and presumptuous Sin. And never be weary of attending holy Ordinances; for long Intermiſſions tend to a total Neglect of Duty, as continued Languor in Duty tendeth to spiritual Death.

P. O that your Advices may be remembered when I shall most need them! I could never have thought there were so many Dangers in the christian Life.

M. I am far from having mentioned them all, nor will I attempt it; but there is one that I must add, because it is the most dreadful; I mean the *Temptation to Infidelity*. Perhaps you may be led to doubt, even the Truth of Scripture, whether it be really the Word of God, or to call in Question the Being of God, or the Divinity and Mediatorial Office of Christ, or the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of everlasting Happiness and Misery: If you abhor such Suggestions, they will nevertheless occasion you great Distress; but if you patiently hearken to them, your Danger will be greatest of all. Indifference in Religion may be called Moderation; but he that doubteth of all Religion, can in a Time of Trial take up with any, while he is heartily of none. He that questioneth whether there is a Heaven, will not be much concerned about the Way to it. He that hath no sincere Faith in Christ, will not reverence the Doctrines or Precepts of Christ. Thus, prevailing Doubts of the Truth of Christianity produce Infidelity and Hypocrisy.

P. I tremble to think of so great a Danger. But if I should be led to doubt of Religion, will all such Doubts be equally dangerous?

E

M. No.

M. No. If your Doubts prevail against your Faith, then your Religion will give Place to your worldly Interest, and you will never forsake all for Christ. But if your Faith prevail against your Doubts, it will then *overcome the World*, and will maintain the Interest of God and Christ, of Holiness and Heaven in your Heart, so that you will use all the Means of Salvation with Seriousness, faithfully performing the most self-denying Duties, and unreservedly forsaking the best-beloved Sins; and however weak your Faith may be, you will prove it sincere.

P. This is comfortable. But I have heard that Infidels can say more against Religion, than the best Christians can answer; and if so, what would become of such an ignorant Person as I am?

M. It is usual for young Christians to be more troubled with Doubts of their own Sincerity, than about the Nature of divine Truths; as you often see larger and older Trees shaken and overthrown by stormy Winds, when young Plants remain in safety. The Reason is, because the larger the Tree, the greater Resistance it maketh against the Wind. God wisely ordereth it, that Root and Top grow together, and thereby the Top is shook by the Wind, no more than the Root is able to bear. Hypocrites grow indeed in the Top of an external Profession, but not in the Root of inward Faith and Love, and therefore fall in the Time of Trial. Besides, it is not the most subtle Wit, but the most sanctified Heart, which will have the best Advantage against Temptations to Infidelity. Young Christians, though illiterate, may stand, when learned Doctors fall and perish.

P. I beg you will tell me, Sir, how I may be established against Temptations to Infidelity.

M. Without troubling you with long and laboured Arguments, I would chiefly recommend to you a thorough Knowledge of what you promised in Baptism.

P. You

P. You seem to make the Baptismal Covenant serve for all religious Purposes.

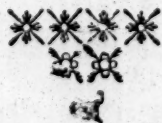
M. As you believe in the Father, who reconcileth us to himself by his Son; and as you believe in the Son, who hath given us eternal Life; so you also believe in the Holy Spirit, whom the Father and the Son send to us, to dwell in us. It is the Holy Spirit therefore that is the Proof of Christianity. All true Christians are *born again*, and *born of the Spirit*. The Holiness of every regenerate Soul is the best Help to a confirmed Belief of the Gospel. If you are truly sanctified, you *have the Witness in yourself*; you have the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, *by which he sealeth you to the Day of Redemption*; and this *Spirit of Promise is the Earnest of your Inheritance* of heavenly Glory. As a Child's Likeness to a Parent evidenceth the Relation, so doth the divine Nature and Image in the Regenerate. God only can regenerate the Souls of Men; but it is impossible God should do this by a false Doctrine, so as at once to honour a Lie, and to deceive the World. This divine Nature which is in you, will not suffer you to deny your Father, Saviour, and Sanctifier. And in this easy Manner you may prove to yourself the Truth of the Gospel, and stand firm against all the Assaults of Infidelity.

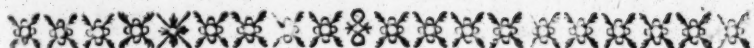
P. May the Lord help me to understand and remember what you have said! I feel it give some Strength to my Faith. But you have not told me, how they, who have not the Spirit, shall be convinced of the Truth of the Gospel.

M. The Works of the Spirit are such as no one can deny, that is faithful to his own Conscience. An unregenerate Man might have been convinced by the Sight of Miracles, and may be convinced by their Historical Evidence. And may not such a one be convinced also of the Fruits of the Spirit, in the Wisdom and Holiness of true Christians, and that *the Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour*?

P. I perceive by this, how necessary it is that all true Christians should cherish the Spirit, and grow in Grace, and live holy and heavenly Lives, because their Holiness is a standing Witness for Christ and the Gospel; and their Sins will dishonour Christ more than I ever imagined.

M. When our blessed Lord *prayed for them which should believe on him through the Word* preached by his Ministers, he urged his Petition with these remarkable Arguments; *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the World may believe that thou hast sent me. And the Glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the World may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* If therefore you desire to overcome Temptations, to honour your Profession, and draw Others to Christ, be solicitous to grow in divine Knowledge; resolve to die, rather than sin wilfully; be ever on your Watch and Guard, as surrounded with Dangers; let your whole Heart and Life be given up to God, and ever employed in his Service; and take Heed of trusting in your own Understanding, Goodness, or Resolutions; but continually look by Faith to Christ and his Spirit, as your only Strength. Thus may the Lord, who hath converted you, *make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you!*





DIALOGUE VI.

The Minister sheweth his Parishioner how he may recommend serious Godliness to all his Acquaintance, especially to his Family.

Minister. COME, Neighbour, I hope by this Time you have acquired such a Measure of Self-Knowledge, as to discern your own true Interest, and what you would desire of me, in Order to your farther Edification and Improvement in a divine Life.

Parishioner. You have with great Freedom instructed me in the Nature of Christianity, and acquainted me with the several Temptations I am likely to meet with, and how to resist them. Indeed, Sir, it appeareth to me much wiser to prepare me for these Things before Hand, than to suffer the Fire to kindle of itself among such Stubble and Gunpowder as there is in my Heart. They are strange Physicians, who rather chuse to cure Diseases at the Height, than to prescribe any Thing by Way of Prevention. But let me intreat you, Sir, to favour me with some farther Instructions for a holy Life, and if you will be pleased to put them in *Writing*, the Favour will be still greater. I fear my Memory will not sufficiently retain what is spoken in Conversation, so as to make a proper Use of it for helping *Others* in divine Knowledge, and more especially my *Family*.

E 3

M. What

M. What Kind of Instructions do you more particularly mean?

P. My Request, Sir, is to have you distinctly write down your *Reasons for Conversion and a holy Life*, and your *Directions how to attain to it*. I well know that the same Reasons which first made me a Christian, must help to keep me so. And I have a Desire to review them frequently, as if I had never been converted; that I may never forget what it was which moved and turned my Heart to God through Christ. I have also a Desire to read over the same Reasons frequently to my Family.

M. Your Desires are good and seasonable. But in drawing up such a Paper, I am afraid it will be necessary to throw so much into a narrow Compass, as to render it almost useless to your Family, unless in reading it to them you will yourself largely explain it, as you go along.

P. I hope my Heart will be so much engaged, while I read it to my Family, that I shall not be easy without endeavouring to the utmost to make them understand it, and to answer all the Questions which it may lead them to ask.

M. Here then is the *Paper*, and may it please God to follow it with an abundant Blessing! Permit me for once to read it to you.—

“ Though the Salvation of Souls is a Thing of
 “ infinite Importance, yet there are Multitudes who
 “ think it not worth their Enquiry. In Hope that
 “ some will have better Thoughts, I beseech the
 “ Reader, as he will soon answer it before God, to
 “ consider and practise the following Directions.”

“ *Know thyself*. Begin at Home. Consider what
 “ it is to be a Man. Thou art nobler than the Brutes.
 “ They serve thee, and are ruled by thee; but Death
 “ endeth all their Pains and Pleasures. Thou hast
 “ Reason, to rule thyself, to know thy God, to fore-
 “ see thy End, and learn thy Way and Duty. Thy
 “ Reason is the Image of God. Thy holy Wisdom
 “ and

" and Goodness is the chief Part of his Image, and
 " on which dependeth thy Happiness. Thou hast a
 " Soul that cannot be satisfied with knowing, till
 " thou knowest God; nor be regularly governed,
 " without a Regard to his Authority, and to the
 " Hopes and Fears of future Joy and Misery; nor
 " be happy, without seeing, loving, and delighting
 " in God, as he is revealed in the other World. Is
 " this rational Nature given thee in vain? If the
 " Nature of all Things be fitted to its Use and End,
 " so must it be with thine."

" *Know thy God.* Know that he is infinitely per-
 " fect, and that he is thy Maker, Owner, and Ruler,
 " thy highest Happiness and chief End. If he be
 " our Ruler, he must have Laws, with Rewards for
 " the Obedient, and Punishments for the Disobedi-
 " ent. If he be our chief Good, we should abso-
 " lutely resign up ourselves to his Will and Pleasure,
 " and be all Obedience and Love to him."

" *Know what Godliness is.* It is sincerely and en-
 " tirely to give ourselves to God; submitting to his
 " Disposals; obeying his Laws, in Hope of his pro-
 " mised Rewards, and Fear of his threatened Punish-
 " ments; delighting in him, and in all the Discove-
 " ries he maketh of himself; desiring to see and
 " enjoy him for ever in heavenly Glory; and daily
 " expressing these Inclinations and Desires in Prayer
 " and Praise. Such Godliness is the Improvement
 " of all our Powers, the End and Business of our
 " Lives, and the Health and Happiness of our Souls."

" *Know what a State of Sin and Ungodliness is.* It
 " is the setting up of carnal-self instead of God.
 " When Men are proud of their own Greatness, Wis-
 " dom, and Goodness; would be at their own Dis-
 " posal; and rule and please themselves, as their
 " fleshly Appetite dictates; and therefore supremely
 " love the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this
 " World; and when God hath Nothing from them

“ but what their carnal Appetite can spare ; this is
 “ a State of Sin and Ungodliness.”

“ *Know that most Men are ungodly.* This you may
 “ learn from Observation and Experience, but especially from Scripture. Men’s Hearts are filled with
 “ Impiety, Filthiness, and Injustice ; their Reason is
 “ a Slave to their Senses ; and *their carnal Mind is*
 “ *Enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the Law*
 “ *of God, neither indeed can be.* This Corruption is
 “ hereditary, and is become, as it were, our Nature.
 “ And a Nature so unholy must be odious to God,
 “ and unfit for the Enjoyment of him here or here-
 “ after ; For *what Communion hath Light with Dark-*
 “ *ness ?*”

“ *Know that Man’s Salvation must be of Grace.*
 “ To love God, and be loved by him, is the Heaven
 “ of Souls ; but all this is contrary to an ungodly
 “ State. Till Men have new and holy Hearts, they
 “ can neither see God, nor love and delight in him.
 “ And till Sin be pardoned, and God reconciled to
 “ the Soul, what Peace or Joy can it expect ?”

“ *Know your Insufficiency for your own Salvation.*
 “ Will a carnal Nature resist and overcome the
 “ Flesh ? Will a worldly Mind overcome the World ?
 “ When Custom hath rooted natural Corruptions, are
 “ they easily rooted up ? How difficult for a hardened,
 “ worldly, filthy Heart to become wise and tender,
 “ holy and heavenly, and abhor the Sins which it
 “ most fondly loved ! And what can we do to sa-
 “ tisfy divine Justice, and reconcile the rebellious
 “ Soul to God ?”

“ *Know that God doth not yet deal with you according*
 “ *to your Deserts.* He prolongeth your Life, and
 “ addeth innumerable Mercies ; though your Sins
 “ have forfeited all. Thus Experience telleth you,
 “ that there is Hope of Mercy for the Children of
 “ Wrath. This Hope cometh by Jesus Christ, who
 “ is the Redeemer and Saviour of the World, and
 “ therefore took our Nature, revealed the Mind and
 “ Will

" Will of God, confirmed his Doctrine by glorious
 " Miracles, was himself an Example of perfect Righ-
 " teousness, suffered the shameful and accursed Death
 " of the Cross for our Sins, rose from the Dead
 " for our Justification, commissioned his Apostles to
 " preach his Gospel to the World, then ascended
 " into Glory, where he ever liveth, intercedeth and
 " reigneth as the adorable Head of his Church.
 " Through this Jesus alone must we have Pardon
 " and Acceptance, and by him only must we come
 " to God. He hath procured and established a Co-
 " venant of Grace, of which Baptism is the Seal,
 " and by which Pardon and Salvation are secured
 " for every Soul that sincerely repenteth towards God,
 " and believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy
 " Spirit accompanieth the Ministrations of this Gos-
 " pel to the converting, regenerating, and sanctify-
 " ing the Souls of Men. And thus by a Saviour
 " and Sanctifier must all be reconciled and renewed,
 " that shall be glorified with God in Heaven. These
 " are the Truths of Holy Scripture."

" *Consider next what is the State of your own Soul.*
 " Are you sincerely penitent and believing? Are
 " you renewed by the Holy Spirit, and so united to
 " Christ? Without this there is no Salvation, and
 " if you die before it be done, wo to you that ever
 " you was a Man! Try your State, and follow the
 " Search, till you know how it is with you. If
 " your Soul is yet a Stranger to this sanctifying
 " Work, fly to Christ without any Delay, and beg
 " for his Spirit, and cast away your Sins, and give
 " up yourself entirely to God in Christ, and engage
 " in his Covenant, with full Resolution never to for-
 " sake him. Deny yourself, and the Desires of the
 " Flesh, and this transitory World, and fix all your
 " Hopes on Heaven, nor rest till your eternal Hap-
 " piness is made sure."

" *Be not ignorant of Satan's Devices, by which he*
 " *hindereth your Sanctification.* He will either sug-

“gest that Holiness is Hypocrisy; or debauch by
 “fleshly Appetites; or keep in Ignorance by the
 “Negligence of Parents and Ministers; or delude
 “by worldly Hopes; or ensnare with evil Company;
 “or stupify the Conscience, and harden the Heart,
 “that eternal Things may make no Impression; or
 “censure the Godly, as all of them melancholy;
 “or where there are Convictions, labour to put off
 “Conversion by Delays; or where the Necessity of
 “Holiness is seen, cheat Souls with some false Ap-
 “pearances of it, and chiefly by intemperate Zeal
 “for Opinions and Parties.”

“*Take Heed of oppressing Reason by Sensuality or*
 “*Diversions.* Love Retirement. God and Consci-
 “ence have much to say, which in a Crowd of Va-
 “nities you are unfit to hear. Why should God and
 “Christ, the Soul and Eternity have none but run-
 “ning Thoughts? Resolve therefore to spend half
 “an Hour daily in the deepest Attention to your
 “everlasting State.”

“*View the Pleasures of this World in their Nearness*
 “*to Death.* Let Dust and Bones teach you the End
 “of all earthly Glory and sensual Joy. Is it doubt-
 “ful whether your Flesh must shortly perish? And
 “why will you provide for it before the never dying
 “Soul? How soon must you bid Farewell to all that,
 “for which worldly Men sell their Souls! The Day
 “is even at Hand; and dare you live unready, and
 “part with Heaven for such a World as this?”

“*Contemplate the Nature of the Life to come.* Think
 “what it is for a Soul to appear before the living
 “God, and be judged to endless Joy or Misery.
 “If the Devil tempt you to doubt of such a Life,
 “remember that Reason and Scripture, this World
 “and his own Temptations, are Witnesses against
 “him.”

“*Observe Men's Thoughts of Holiness when they*
 “*come to die.* Except it be some desperate Wretch,
 “do they not all speak well of it, and wish their
 “Lives

“ Lives had been spent in fervent Love to God, and
 “ strict Obedience to his Laws? Do they then mag-
 “ nify Lust and Pleasure, Wealth and Honour? Had
 “ they not rather die like mortified Saints, than
 “ careless Sinners? See and know this, O Man!
 “ and be wise in Time.”

“ *Think who they were, that are now honoured for*
 “ *their Holiness.* What Manner of Life did Apostles
 “ live, and all the Saints and Martyrs? Was it a Life
 “ of carnal Delights? Did they make a Jest of Ho-
 “ liness, or dare to persecute it? And is he not self-
 “ condemned, who honoureth the Name of Saints,
 “ but will not imitate them?”

“ *Distinguish well between a Christian and a Heathen,*
 “ *and between a godly and an ungodly Christian.* You
 “ are unwilling to be an Heathen or Infidel; but
 “ doth a Christian only excel in Opinion? Must not
 “ the unholy Christian suffer more than the Heathen?
 “ Is not every ungodly Christian an Hypocrite, while
 “ the godly is sincere in his Profession? How base is
 “ that Religion, which only serveth to condemn Men,
 “ because their Lives are contrary to their Tongues!”

“ *See through the Devil's Policy in the Number of*
 “ *religious Opinions, Parties, and Controversies.* How
 “ many think themselves religious, for their zealous
 “ Talk, their peculiar Notions and Speculations, or
 “ their distinguishing Sect! How often is edifying
 “ Discourse turned into unprofitable Dispute! Tho'
 “ you cannot resolve every Doubt, nor answer every
 “ Question, yet you may easily know the true Reli-
 “ gion; for it is that which Christ and his Apostles
 “ taught, which Scripture requireth, and in which
 “ all Christians are agreed; *it is first pure, then*
 “ *peaceable,* most spiritual and heavenly, just and
 “ charitable.”

“ *Fly from profane and sensual Company.* It is an
 “ Enemy to Reason, Sobriety, and Holiness. How
 “ can they be wise for you, who are foolish for them-
 “ selves? Or have Pity on your Soul, who have no

“ Pity on their own? Will they help you to Heaven,
 “ who are making such Haste to Hell? Chuse better
 “ Companions, if you would be better.”

“ Once more, *judge not of a holy Life by Hearsay.*
 “ Try, and then judge. But it is not true Holiness,
 “ if you only try it with Exceptions and Reserves.
 “ Therefore no longer delay, but resolutely and en-
 “ tirely give up yourself to God, as your reconciled
 “ Father; to Christ, as your Saviour; and to the
 “ Holy Spirit, as your Sanctifier, in the Bonds of
 “ an everlasting Covenant. Every Blessing will then
 “ be your own. You will have Grace to help, Mer-
 “ cy to pardon, the best Ministers and Christians to
 “ assist you with their Counsels and Prayers, Angels
 “ to guard you, divine Promises for your Cordials,
 “ and the Spirit of Promise to dwell in you. When
 “ you leave this World, your Saviour will receive
 “ your Soul to the Participation of his Glory, and
 “ afterward raise and refine your Body, and justify
 “ you before the World, and make you equal to
 “ Angels, and you shall live for ever in the glori-
 “ ous Sight and perfect Love of God. This is the
 “ End of Faith and Holiness. But if you harden
 “ your Heart, and refuse Mercy, then everlasting
 “ Wo will be your Portion, and there will be no
 “ Remedy.”

“ Now, *Reader*, I beg of you, and beg of God
 “ on my bended Knees, that these few Words may
 “ sink into your Heart. Think, as one that must
 “ shortly die, who deserveth your Love and Obedi-
 “ ence more than God? Or your thankful Remem-
 “ brance more than Christ? Or your Care and Di-
 “ ligence more than your own Salvation? Is there any
 “ Felicity more desirable than Heaven? Or any Mi-
 “ sery more terrible than Hell? I know you live in
 “ a distracted World, where too many are laughing
 “ at these Things, and reproaching the Godly, and
 “ amidst all their vain Amusements are saying, they
 “ trust God with their Souls, and hope to be saved
 with-

“ without so much ado. But if God and Conscience witness against Sin, and for a holy Life, I beseech you never to regard their Gainsayings, who will soon be glad to eat their Words, and will wish they had lived a holy Life, though it had cost them the greatest shame and suffering this World could inflict. O Man! no longer delay; but resolve immediately and unchangeably, and God will be your's, and you shall be his for ever. *Amen.*”

P. Sir, I heartily thank you. This *Paper* is the very Thing I wished for, and may God help me to make a good Use of it! If I should be so happy as to see my Family awakened to a Sense of their Need of Holiness, while I read and explain to them these Directions, I shall then be desirous of giving them farther Help, by setting before them the particular *Duties of a christian Life*. Though I have attained, by the Blessing of God upon your Instructions, to some Knowledge of my Duty; yet my Thoughts of it are very confused, and I much want your Assistance in leading me to a clearer Knowledge of every Part of my Duty, both to my own Soul, and to the Souls in my House, and how one Part of Duty is connected with another. And if such Instruction was also given me in Writing, it might be exceedingly useful both to me and my Family.

M. Indeed, my Friend, this additional Request is so reasonable, that I know not how to deny you. I have here *another Paper*, which I also drew up some Time ago, and in which I hope, you will find your Desire gratified. I will read it to you, and then leave it with you.

“ When Men have begun a religious Life, they have much more yet to do. All Blossoms are not fruitful, nor doth all Fruit come to Perfection. Many Souls fall away, who had very promising Beginnings. Many dishonour Christ, grieve their faithful Ministers, and disturb the Peace of the Church,
“ by

“ by their Ignorance and Errors, their Contentions
 “ and Divisions. Many by their irregular Passions
 “ are a Burthen to the Neighbourhoods and Families
 “ where they live, and to themselves also. Whereas
 “ real Christianity is a Life of such holy Light and
 “ Love, such Purity and Peace, as demandeth the
 “ Admiration and Reverence of all Men, and great-
 “ ly contributeth to their Conversion, and at the same
 “ Time rendereth Christians eminently useful and
 “ amiable to each other, and unspeakably happy in
 “ themselves. To promote these important Pur-
 “ poses, let the Duties of a Christian Life be atten-
 “ ded to under the following Heads.”

“ *Let christian Doctrine lie clear and distinct in your*
 “ *Understanding and Memory.* This will establish you
 “ against Seduction and Infidelity, and will be al-
 “ ways present with you for your Help in every
 “ Grace and Duty, like the Skill of an Artist in
 “ performing any Work he undertaketh. For Want
 “ of this, your Faith may too easily be shaken by
 “ the specious Reasonings of *them who lie in Wait*
 “ *to deceive.*”

“ *Live daily by Faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, as*
 “ *the Mediator between God and you.* Having a clear
 “ Understanding and firm Persuasion of Christ's Of-
 “ fice, make Use of him in all your Wants. Think
 “ of the Fatherly Love of God as coming to you
 “ only through Christ; of the Holy Spirit as his
 “ Purchase and Promise; of the Covenant of Grace
 “ as sealed by his Blood; of the christian Ministry
 “ as his Appointment, and of all your Time and
 “ Talents as his Gift. When you think of Sin, In-
 “ firmity, and Temptation, think also of his par-
 “ doning, sanctifying, and all-sufficient Grace. Let
 “ his Doctrine and perfect Example be always before
 “ you as your Rule. Go to him in all your Doubts
 “ and Fears, and take him as the Spring of your
 “ Life, and Strength, and Joy, and live upon him,
 “ and

“ and by him. When you die, resign your Soul to him, that you may *be with him where he is.*”

“ *Believe in the Holy Spirit, so as to live and act by him as the Body doth by the Soul.* You are for this very Purpose baptized into his Name. The Spirit, having indited the Gospel, and sealed the Truth of it by Miracles, doth thereby regenerate and govern all true Believers. He is not now given to reveal new Doctrines, but to enable us to understand and obey what is revealed. As the Sun by its sweet and secret Influence produceth and nourisheth natural, so doth the Holy Spirit our spiritual Life. In the Strength, and under the Guidance of the Spirit, you must believe, love, pray, and even manage all your common Concerns, that *Holiness to the Lord* may be written upon all.”

“ *Live wholly to God.* Let Faith and Hope in him, and Love to him, be daily exercised. Make Use of the Son and Spirit to lead you to the Father; and of Faith in Christ to kindle and keep alive the Love of God. Neither know, desire, nor love any Creature, but purely in Subordination to God. Call Nothing Prosperity or Pleasure but his Love; nor any Thing Adversity or Misery but his Frowns. See the Old Serpent in all those who would allure, or affright you from your Duty to God. Fear God much, but love him more. Let Love be the Soul and End of every other Duty. Place not your Religion in any Thing but the Love of God, or in what leadeth to it, or is produced by it.”

“ *Daily delight in the Belief and Hopes of heavenly Glory.* On Earth the Sight of God is, as in a Glass; but when we behold the Glory of God in Heaven, the Delights of Love to him will be perfect. On Earth your Desires may exceed your Hopes. Look not for Mount Zion in the Wilderness. Christ reigneth on Earth, as *Moses* in the Camp, only to guide us to the Land of Promise.
“ Our

“ Our perfect Blessedness will be there, where *the*
 “ *Kingdom is delivered up to the Father*, and where
 “ God is *All in All*. A doubtful or heartless Thought
 “ of Heaven is like Water cast on the sacred Fire, to
 “ quench your Holiness and Joy. How can you
 “ travel one whole Day to such an End, and never
 “ think of the Place, to which you are going?
 “ When Earth is at its best, it will not be Heaven.
 “ You live by Faith, as Christians, only in Proportion
 “ as you live for Heaven in seeking it, or upon
 “ Heaven in Hope and Joy.”

“ *Strive to make Religion always pleasant*. Often
 “ look to God and Heaven, to Christ and the Spirit,
 “ to Promises, and to Mercies received. Recollect
 “ your past Experiences, and contemplate your future
 “ Blessedness; and think how unbecoming and
 “ injurious it is to your Profession, to hope for Heaven,
 “ and yet live as mournfully, as those that have
 “ no higher Hopes than Earth. How should it fill
 “ you with Joy, to think of living in the Joys of
 “ Heaven for ever! Especially rejoice when the Messengers
 “ of Death tell you that your eternal Joy is
 “ nigh. Abhor all Suggestions which would make
 “ Religion seem a tedious irksome Life, either to
 “ yourself, or Others. The Hypocrite forceth and
 “ frameth his Religion to his carnal Pleasures; but
 “ our Hearts must have a holy Suitableness to the
 “ Pleasure of Religion.”

“ *Watch against this flattering delusive World*. Satan
 “ puts the Pleasure, Wealth, and Honour of this
 “ World in the Balance against God, and Holiness,
 “ and Heaven. The Bait succeedeth, while Reason
 “ is asleep, and thereby is made a Slave to Sensuality.
 “ Both our Reason and Faith are weak, if for
 “ the Poms and Vanities of this World we can forget
 “ God and our Souls, Death and Judgment,
 “ Heaven and Hell, and even deliberately command
 “ them to stand by. How deplorable then is the
 “ Condition of worldly Men! O fear the World,
 “ when

“ when it smileth, or seemeth sweet and amiable!
“ Love it not, if you would love God and your own
“ Salvation.”

“ *Crucify the Flesh.* Many who had no prevailing
“ Vice, or worldly Interest, have nevertheless shame-
“ fully fallen by the sudden Surprize of irregular
“ Appetites. The Tears and Sorrows of many Years
“ may perhaps not repair the Loss occasioned by one
“ transient Indulgence; as was the Case of *David*,
“ and many Others. Know what Lust you are most
“ in Danger of, and there set your strongest Watch,
“ and make it your daily Business to subdue and
“ mortify it. Depend not merely on Resolutions,
“ but fly from Temptation, touch not, nor look on
“ the tempting Bait. What vast Miseries come from
“ small Beginnings! Temptations lead to Sin, and
“ small Sins to greater; and Sin and Hell are not to
“ be played with. Open your Sin or Snare to some
“ Friend, that shame may save you from Danger.”

“ *Keep a strict Watch over your Words and Thoughts.*
“ To this End, preserve a tender Conscience, and
“ well-regulated Affections. Know well the Sins and
“ Duties of the Tongue, that you may avoid the
“ one, and discharge the other. Your Innocence
“ and Peace much depend on this Part of Self-Gov-
“ ernment; nor less on the Government of your
“ Thoughts. It is easy to think on what we love;
“ and therefore furnish yourself with Matter for Me-
“ ditation, and often retire for that Purpose. But
“ take Heed of over-stretching your Thoughts by
“ deep Musings, nor let them be scattered abroad
“ upon impertinent Vanities. Be considerate; dwell
“ much at Home; and most intimately converse with
“ your God and Conscience. He was never wise,
“ or good, or happy, who was a Stranger to sober
“ and impartial Consideration. How to be good, to
“ do good, and finally enjoy good, must be the Sum
“ of all our Thoughts. Keep them first holy, then
“ chaste

“ chaste and charitable, and immediately check them
 “ in their first Motions towards Sin.”

“ *Carefully and diligently redeem Time.* What Haste
 “ doth it make? How soon will it be gone? How
 “ highly will it be valued, when a Moment of it
 “ cannot be recalled? What important Business have
 “ we to do, though we should live a Thousand
 “ Years? Take not that Man to be in his Senses,
 “ or to know his God, his Work, or his Danger,
 “ who hath Time to spare. Spend Time as Men
 “ that are going out of the World. Let not Health
 “ deceive you in Expectation of living long. Com-
 “ pute your Expence of Time, and redeem it from
 “ Sleep and Idleness, from Curiosity and Compli-
 “ ment, from unnecessary Recreation, and even from
 “ such inferior Good as would hinder a greater. So
 “ spend Time, that you may comfortably review it,
 “ when it is gone, and in the nearest Views of Eter-
 “ nity.”

“ *Love your Neighbour as yourself.* Abhor all that
 “ Selfishness, Pride, and Passion, which are the Ene-
 “ mies of Love; and those Opinions and Parties,
 “ Censures and Backbitings, which would destroy it.
 “ Take him for Satan’s Messenger, who speaketh
 “ Evil of another, without a just Cause. Rebuke
 “ Backbiters. Be as zealous in doing good to all,
 “ as Satan and his Instruments are in hurting. Let
 “ the publick Good, and the Salvation of Men, be
 “ your Business, and not an accidental Affair. And
 “ what you are not able to do yourself, persuade
 “ Others to do.”

“ *Take heed of spiritual Pride.* If you over-value
 “ your own Understanding, you will treat your crude
 “ Conceptions and gross Mistakes as if they were
 “ Gospel-Truths; and instead of having Compassion
 “ on the Weak, you will despise your Teachers,
 “ censure all that differ from you, persecute them
 “ as far as you have Power, and think all those in-
 “ tolerable, who will not take you for an Oracle,
 “ and

“ and your Sayings for a Law. The Church hath
“ always suffered by such proud, peevish, and un-
“ ruly Professors on the one Hand, as well as by the
“ Profane on the other. Take Heed of Both. When
“ Contentions are rising, be you quiet and silent,
“ and not too forward; but keep up a Zeal for
“ Love and Peace.”

“ *Make Conscience of Relative Duties.* Honour and
“ obey Parents, and other Superiors. Neither des-
“ pise, nor resist Government. If you suffer unjust-
“ ly, take it patiently, and be humbled for those
“ Sins, which turn your Guardians into Occasions
“ of Affliction and Sorrow. Instead of murmuring
“ and rebelling against them, reform yourself, and
“ commit your all to God.”

“ *Maintain Family-Religion.* Holy Families must
“ be the chief Preservers of Religion in the World.
“ Let not worldly Care turn the Worship of God
“ in your House into a lifeless Form. Read the
“ Scriptures and pious Books to all the Souls under
“ your Care. Talk with them seriously of their
“ eternal Interest. Pray with them fervently. Watch
“ over them diligently. Be to them an Example of
“ Wisdom, Holiness, and Patience. And see that
“ the Lord's-Day be spent in devout Preparation for
“ Eternity.”

“ *Manage your worldly Business with Industry and
“ Piety.* Live not in Idleness. Labour, and work the
“ Thing which is good, that you may have to give to
“ him that needeth. Slothfulness is Sensuality. The
“ Body, as far as it is able, must be employed, as
“ well as the Soul, or both will be Losers. But let
“ all be as the Labour of a Traveller, and in all
“ aim at God and Heaven.”

“ *Seek Peace of Conscience on a scriptural Foundation.*
“ Value an able and faithful Minister, to whom
“ you may open your Case in Secret; or any other
“ experienced Christian; and be not displeased with
“ their Reproofs. Avoid, not only presumptuous
“ Hopes

“ Hopes, which would embolden you in Sin ; but
 “ unreasonable Fears, which will hinder your loving
 “ and praising God, by obscuring his Loveliness, and
 “ make you a Burthen to yourself, and a stumbling
 “ Block to Others. Judge not your spiritual State
 “ to be good, for your abundant Knowledge, good
 “ Memory, ready Utterance, or lively Affections ;
 “ but because God, and Holiness, and Heaven have
 “ your highest Estimation, your deliberate and resolute
 “ Choice, and your most earnest Endeavours.”

“ To conclude, *Be prepared for Sickness, Sufferings,*
 “ *and Death.* Live above outward Prosperity, and
 “ the Favour of Man. If they whom you have most
 “ obliged, should be false and cruel to you, wonder
 “ not, but pray for your Enemies, Persecutors,
 “ and Slanders, that God would turn their Hearts,
 “ and pardon their Sins. As the Love of this World
 “ is your Soul’s greatest Danger, therefore account
 “ it your Mercy to be driven from the World to God.
 “ Be ready to die, and you are ready for all other
 “ Events. Seriously ask your Heart, what shall I
 “ want in a dying Hour ? And let it be procured
 “ without Delay, and not be to seek in the Time of
 “ your Extremity.”

“ This is true Religion and Godliness. All this
 “ is no more than to be seriously such, as we generally
 “ profess ourselves to be. This will distinguish
 “ you from Hypocrites, will make you an Honour
 “ to your Profession, and a Blessing to all about you.
 “ Happy is the Land, the Church, the Family, in
 “ which such as these are found !”

P. O ! Sir, may I and my Family partake of such
 serious Godliness ! I hope these Papers you put into
 my Hands will help it forward. I think them a
 great Treasure, and can never enough thank you for
 them, and for all your Care and Kindness.



DIALOGUE VII.

The Minister urgeth upon his Parishioner the infinite Importance of doing all he can to engage his Family in serious Godliness.

Minister. I AM very desirous to know, my Friend, what Use you have already made of the Assistance afforded you in our last Interview. Is your new and divine Life the better for those Instructions which you then took Home with you?

Parishioner. I find the Things, Sir, which you have recommended, are high and excellent, and must certainly be very sweet to those who have suitable Skill and Disposition; and some Pleasure I meet with in my weak Beginnings. But the Greatness of the Work, and my many Doubts, and Fears, and Difficulties almost overcome me. Amidst my Failings I perceive my Need of Repentance towards God, and to fly by Faith to Christ for Pardon; and O, how hard is it to repent and believe aright! If you had not forewarned me of this Temptation, I should have thought my Condition, though sifer, yet more distressing than ever it was. But I hope I am in the Way to have more Enjoyment of myself.

M. What do you apprehend to be at present your principal Difficulty?

P. There is a great Work for me to do in my Family, to govern them in the Fear of God, and do my Duty to them all, especially to educate my Children

dren, and daily to worship God among them ; and I am so utterly unfit for it, that I am ready to omit all. I beseech you, Sir, help me with your Advice.

M. I would have you resolve, in the Strength of divine Grace, to perform your Duty in your Family as well as you can ; and therefore devote it to God, and take him for the Lord and Master of it, and use it as a Society sanctified to him. If God be not the Master of your Family, the Devil will. If you devote your Family to God, he will be its Guardian and Provider, and will mingle his Blessing with all its Comforts and Sorrows. A holy Family is a Place of Rest, even a Church of God. You will daily live in the joyful Hope of meeting and dwelling together in Heaven, and that your Wife, Children, and Servants shall shortly be Fellow-Citizens with you of the heavenly Jerusalem. How pleasant to join with one Heart and Mind in Prayers and Praises to God ! How lovely to see in each other the Image of God ! What domestic Miseries will be prevented, which Sin would daily occasion ! And when any of you die, how comfortably may the rest attend the Grave, in Hope that the Soul is received to Christ in Glory ! On the contrary, if your Family be ungodly, it will be grievous to think of Wife, and Children, and Servants, as exposed daily to the Wrath and Curse of God ; and their Sickness and Death will be rendered unspeakably more awful. Holy Families are indeed the chief Seminaries of the Church of Christ upon Earth. From thence spring pious and faithful Magistrates and Ministers. Many a civil and religious Community may thank God for the Endeavours of pious Parents in training up those Children in the Fear of God, who were afterwards the most distinguished Blessings to the Church and World. Though Learning be found in Schools, Godliness is often received in more early Education. In worshiping Assemblies, the Devotion and Attention is principally among those, who are Members of pious Families ; and for
such

such, good Ministers labour with peculiar Pleasure. And in degenerate Times, when good Ministers are wanting, their *Lack of Service* is best supplied by the pious Heads of pious Families. In some Respects the Instruction, Worship, and Discipline of such Families have Advantages, which Churches have not. There are but few to teach and rule, and those few are always present, and may be spoke to in Season, and with Frequency, either together, or each one apart. They are united by Relation, Affection, and Covenant, and have the same Necessities and Interests. Nor are Families under any of those Restrictions relating to Doctrine, Worship, or Discipline, which often perplex Ministers, and hinder the Edification of Churches. If therefore you have the Bowels of a Parent, devote your Children to God, teach them his Word, educate them in Holiness, restrain them from Sin, and prepare them for Salvation.

P. I must confess there is great Reason for what you say, if I only consult my natural Affection, and much more my Experience. Had my Parents better educated me in my Childhood, I should not have been so ignorant, nor perhaps so ungodly, as I have been. But, alas! few Parents do their Duty. Many take more Care of their Trades or Farms, than of their Children's everlasting Happiness.

M. I wish I could speak so, that all Parents might hear! I would freely tell them, that Multitudes are more cruel to their own Children than Bears and Lions. God hath committed their Children's Souls as much to their Care, as their Bodies. They are first to devote them to God in Baptism; then to teach and exhort them to keep the Baptismal Covenant; and after to remind them of the State of their Souls, and their Need of Christ and Redemption, of Holiness and everlasting Life. They are to watch over them with Wisdom, Love, and Diligence, in Order to save them from Satan, Sin, and Hell; and are always to set before them the Ex-
ample

ample of a holy Life. But instead of this, they turn the Covenant of Baptism into a mere Ceremony, in which they hypocritically promise without intending to perform, or devolve that Promise on God-Fathers and God-Mothers as ignorant and ungodly as themselves. They never teach their Children their Danger from depraved Inclinations, and the Snares and Temptations which every where surround them, nor their Need of a Saviour and Sanctifier, to fit them for eternal Blessedness. They chide them for Faults against their Health and outward Prosperity, or by which they themselves are any Way injured; but Faults against God and their Souls are overlooked. They are content their Children should spend the Lord's-Day in vain Amusements, instead of having Family-Prayer, Reading the Scriptures, with other pious Books, and Catechising, to attend upon. So that they in Effect teach them to break their Baptismal Vow, and, under the Name of Christians, to rebel against God and Christ. Is not this greater Cruelty, than if they famished their Bodies, or turned them naked into the World? Is not the Devil himself less cruel; for he hath no Relation to them, nor charge over them? But for Father and Mother thus to betray their Children's Souls, is worse then devilish! O unmerciful Parents, repent for your own Sakes; repent for the Sake of your Children! How can we hope you should have Mercy on your Children's Souls, till you have Mercy on your own Souls? Or that you should help them to Heaven, while you despise it yourselves? Or save them from Sin, while it is your own Delight?

P. Your Complaint is just and awful. But I find many think the Education of their Children belongeth to School-masters and Ministers.

M. In the Business of Education Parents have the first and principal Share. If Children and Servants are sent to a Minister, in Ignorance and Impiety, he must do his best for them. But how much more
good

good might he do, if Parents did their Part! We talk of the Badness of the Age, and at the same Time it is chiefly owing to irreligious Heads of Families. We call for Reformation in Church and State, when we take no Care to reform one small Family.

P. I tremble to think of my Children being lost for ever, and their Damnation lying at my Door; and therefore I beg to know my Duty to them.

M. As the divine Promise is made to true Christians and their Seed, therefore be first of all sincere in your own covenanting with God. Well-understand the Covenant, and humble yourself for your Violations of it, and then with the greatest Seriousness and Thankfulness enter your Children into the same Covenant. As long as they are Infants, their Right to Covenant-Blessings intirely dependeth on your sincere Repentance and Faith. When they grow up to Reason, do your Utmost to engage their own hearty Consent to the Covenant. Be solicitous at once to inform their Understandings, and excite their Affections. While you teach them the Words of Scripture, and of Catechisms, ask them also familiar Questions about the State of their own Souls, and their personal Concern with God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell. Possess their Minds with the greatest Reverence of God and the Holy Scriptures. Often enquire what they know, what are their Affections and Resolutions, and what they do, both in their open and secret Practice. Use all your Skill and Diligence to make a holy Life appear to them, as it really is, the most honourable and profitable, the most safe and pleasant Life in the World. Early acquaint them with easy and entertaining Parts of Scripture and Church-History. Speak much in Praise of holy Men in the former, or latter Ages, and point out the opposite Characters of those who were noted Enemies to Godliness, that they may see the odious Nature of Vice and Profaneness, of Pride and Covetousness.

F

Give

Give large Encomiums on the Riches of Grace, and the Joys of Glory. Let the singing of Psalms and Hymns be their frequent Exercise. Constantly but gently accustom them to submit their Will to your's, and this in Order to their giving themselves up to the Will of God in all Things: And therefore shew them, that the chief Thing Satan desireth for them, is to have all their own Humour and Inclination; but that they always need to pray to God, *Thy Will be done*, and to deny their own. As you love their Souls, keep them as far as possible out of the Way of Temptation. Take great Care of their Diet, that it be always healthful and moderate. Never let either their Body or Mind be idle. Even their Recreations should tend more to invigorate Nature, than to please a corrupt Fancy; and therefore keep them from Gaming for Money, or reading lewd Novels, or Plays, or seeing them acted upon the Stage. In their Apparel, consult Health and Decency, and avoid Pride and unnecessary Expence. As for their Company, direct their Choice of the prudent and pious, give them earnest and frequent Cautions against the contrary, and especially against every indecent Freedom with Persons of another Sex. Charge them to maintain Truth and Uprightness in all they say and do. Often shew them the Worth of Time, the Great Work to be done in it for Eternity, and how uncertain the Life of Man. Put into their Hands the Writings of the best Divines. Set before them a holy Example. Chuse such Callings for them, and lead them into such Connections in Life, as have the greatest Likelihood to promote their religious Interests. Do all this in the Meekness of Wisdom, and with such fervent Prayer for them, that they may daily perceive the Bowels of a Parent, and how dear they are to you, and that you are ever aiming at their truest Happiness.

P. Now, Sir, be pleased to tell me my Duty to my Wife, and her's to me.

M. The

M. The Duty which Husband and Wife owe to each other is obvious. Dwell together in Love. Faithfully help each other in the Education of your Children, the Government of the Family, and the Management of your worldly Affairs. Especially excite each other to every christian Grace and Virtue; strengthen each other against all Temptations to Sin; join together in Family and secret Worship; prepare each other for the Approaches of Death; and administer divine Comforts to each other in the Prospects of Eternity. Labour with all your Might to please each other in all Things that are lawful; carefully avoiding Dissentions, and resolving to bear with each others Infirmities. Carry this mutual Support and Comfort through every Scene of Affliction, not only of Pain or Sickness, but of Poverty and Want, or any other Dangers and Distresses. And though all outward Comforts should fail, yet endeavour to be delightful Companions in holy Love, and in heavenly Hopes and Joys.

P. But I should be glad to know what are the peculiar Duties of a religious Husband?

M. In all the Exercise of his distinguishing Authority, he should take Care that Love be apparently and inseparably united with it. And, though it is chiefly his Province to teach, govern, and provide for the Family; yet it should also be his invariable Rule of Conduct to support the Honour and Authority of his Wife among all the other Members of his Family. Nor should his Superiority to her be discerned in any Thing so much, as his more eminent Attainments in Knowledge and Grace, and consequently as her Instructor in the Things of God, and the first and ablest to bear up under every Trial.

P. And what is there peculiar in the Duties of a religious Wife?

M. Certainly it will be her Part always to excel in Love; and in Love be chearfully obedient, and meekly submissive to her Husband's Will and Plea-

sure in all Things consistent with the Will of God. She should ever be intent on increasing his Love to her, Confidence in her, and setting a lovely Example to all the rest of the Family, by her Wisdom and Prudence, her Integrity and Uprightness, her Humility and Sweetness of Temper, the Law of Kindness in her Lips, Contentment with her Condition, industrious Improvement of her Time, great Caution in the Choice of her Acquaintance, and a Frugality in her Expences justly proportioned to her Husband's Ability and the best Interest of her Family. Above all, she should be most eminent in training up her Children from their earliest Years in Knowledge and Piety. This is the greatest and best Service she can do in the World. For this she hath the most desirable Capacities and Opportunities. She is ever with them, and hath them always under her Eye, and her ardent Love must prompt her to do all in her Power for their Salvation. She will often catechise them, and speak to them in the most insinuating Manner of God and Christ, of Heaven and Holiness, of the Evil of Sin, and the Nature and Necessity, the Pleasure and Profit of Prayer. As a prudent and pious Mother, she may educate Children for every valuable Station in Society, by infusing into them that honest and holy Temper, which is the principal Ingredient in all the most useful and respectable Characters. Thus may she prove one of the chief Instruments in reforming Churches and Kingdoms, and consequently one of the greatest Blessings to the World.

P. O how desirable that every Wife should answer your Description!—Pray what is the Duty of Children to Parents?

M. They must love their Parents affectionately; learn of them with submissive Attention, especially divine Truths; diligently obey them in all Things lawful, from a conscientious Obedience to God; treat them with every Token of Reverence and Esteem; be contented and satisfied with what their Parents provide;
ever

ever ready for every Employment, as their Parents shall direct; patiently receive their Parents' Admonitions and Corrections, humbly confessing their Faults, and promising to amend; and taking the Advice of their Parents, as to their Acquaintance, Situations, and Connections in Life; especially doing their utmost for their Assistance and Support, if they should at any Time need it.

P. And what is the Duty of Children toward their Heavenly Father?

M. They should learn their own Sinfulness by Nature and Practice, the Engagements of their Baptifinal Covenant, and how to renew their own Covenant with God, so as entirely to give up themselves, with the greatest Seriousness and Resolution, to their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. In Order to their Deliverance from the Guilt of Sin, and its reigning Power in their Hearts and Lives, they should daily apply to Christ by Faith and Prayer for his justifying and sanctifying Grace. They should remember that the Life they are here entered upon, is short and uncertain, full of Labour and Sorrow, and in which their grand Concern should be to make sure of eternal Life. For this Purpose, the Word of God should be their delightful Study, especially on Lord's-Days; and every Day they should *flee from youthful Lusts, and be Lovers of God more than Lovers of sinful Pleasures*; ever esteeming it their greatest Liberty, and highest Honour and Happiness, to have their Wills bowed to the Will of God, and to that of their Superiors, for God's Sake.

P. As I have Servants in my Family, I shall be glad to know, Sir, what is my Duty to them?

M. While you exert so much Authority, as is necessary to secure Obedience and Respect; let it always be joined with the Mildness and Meekness of the Friend and the Christian. Make Conscience of instructing them in the Way of Salvation by Jesus Christ; pray for them and with them; and ever set

before them a Pattern of every christian Grace and Virtue. Keep them from bad Company, and all the Temptations and Opportunities of sinning against God, that you possibly can. Never impose upon them any Thing contrary to their Consciences, or injurious to their bodily Health. Patiently bear with their Frailties and Infirmities, and leave them no just Occasion to complain of you, as unfaithful or ungenerous, in your Engagements to them.

P. How would you have Servants behave towards their Master?

M. Undoubtedly it is their indispenfible Duty, while he commandeth Nothing but what is in itself lawful, and fit for them to do, to avoid all Speech and Behaviour that savoureth of Dishonour, Contempt, or Disobedience; to manifest a chearful Readiness, without any Grudging; and to be as faithful behind his Back, as before his Face. They must therefore abhor Lying and Deceit, and never defraud him in buying or selling, nor take any Thing that is his, without his Consent; but be as careful and frugal for their Master, as if it were for themselves. Instead of murmuring, from a Desire of Luxury and Idleness; they should be more solicitous about doing their own Duty to their Master, than about his Behaviour to them; because Sin is worse than any Suffering. The Secrets of the Family they are never to reveal. When admonished of their Faults, they should patiently submit, freely confess, and faithfully amend. As they should daily pray for themselves, so they should never forget to pray for the Family, that a divine Blessing may be upon all its Affairs and Interests. And the whole of their Service to their earthly Master should be in Obedience to God, and in Expectation of their best Reward from him.

P. While Children and Servants are together in the same Family, it cannot be without some Inconvenience.

venience, and pray how would you wish them to behave towards each other?

M. By all Means to excite one another to all their Duties to God, and to their Parents, and to their Master and Mistress; to be helping one another in useful Knowledge, and especially the Knowledge of Christ and Salvation by him; and affectionately to guard each other against Temptations to Sin. They have Need of great Care, that they be not Tempters to one another, either to Wantonness, Luxury, angry Passions, or the Arts of Fraud and Deceit. On the contrary, they should always in Humility and Love do as they would be done by, without Envy, Strife, or Ambition, ever solicitous to pass by little Offences, and hide each others Faults, so far as will be consistent with the real Happiness of the Family. But for Sins against God, they should admonish one another privately; nor let it be known to the Head of the Family, till private Admonition is found ineffectual.

P. I with my Questions may not weary you. I have yet two or three more to ask; and particularly, Sir, what is my Duty to my Neighbours?

M. By the second Table of divine Commands, you are required to love them as yourself, and to do, both for their Souls and Bodies, as you would be done by; to the utmost of your Ability promoting their Comfort and Usefulness, their Knowledge and Piety, speaking no Evil of them, doing them no Injury, and patiently bearing and forgiving Injuries from them.

P. And how may I be a good Subject to Magistrates?

M. Give them Honour and Reverence, as deriving their Commission from God himself. Do all you can to support their Authority. Pay them every Tribute that shall become due. Obey them in all Things consistent with Obedience to God and Conscience; excite Others to the same Obedience; and patiently

suffer where God forbiddeth you to obey. Ever promote the free Execution of Justice, and oppose and detect to the utmost all Treasons, Conspiracies and Rebellions. Do all this for Conscience Sake, in Obedience to God, and for the publick Good, and enforce it with your constant and fervent Prayers.

P. Let me now beg some particular Directions how to spend every Day in my Family, answerable to my christian Profession?

M. As Time is very precious, waste none of it in unnecessary Sleep. Lift up your first waking Thoughts to God, in Thankfulness for the Mercies of the Night; at the same Time contemplating the blessed Rest in his glorious Presence, and what a Priviledge it is to be always in his Love, and under his Protection. After as few Moments as possible have been spent in dressing the Body, let devout Retirement for secret Prayer adorn the Soul; and especially let the whole Family be united together in Prayer Morning and Evening, at such Hours as shall be found most convenient for their Attendance. Consider all your worldly Business, as the Work to which God hath called you, in which you are serving him, and may expect his Protection and Blessing; and therefore do it with a single Eye to his Glory, and with constant Diligence, believing that Idleness is equally injurious to Body, Soul, and Estate. Whether your Business be transacted alone, or in Company, endeavour to connect with it some devout Meditations, or improving Converse. Let Temperance ever attend your Table and your Cup, and every Meal begin and conclude with Prayer and Praise. At the Close of the Day, recollect how you have spent it, that you may be thankful for its distinguishing Mercies, penitent for its Faults and Follies, seek fresh Supplies of pardoning and sanctifying Grace, and lie down to Rest with a holy Confidence in divine Favour and Friendship.

P. You advise to Family-Worship twice a Day; but how shall I perform it?

M. First,

M. First, with Reverence and Humility, look up to God for his gracious Assistance and Acceptance; then read a Chapter or Psalm out of the Bible, or a Page or two of some good Expositor, and after singing a Psalm or Hymn, if it can be done, conclude with a fervent Prayer, suited, as much as may be, to the State of your own Mind, and the particular Circumstances of your Family.

P. Are short or long Prayers to be preferred?

M. In this Case, it will be best to vary, according to the Difference of Times and Persons. But great Care should be taken, that your Prayers be not lengthened by Formality and Affectation, nor be contracted by Carnality and Sloth.

P. Will it be best to pray by a Book, or, as I am enabled, freely to express my Desires in my own Words?

M. God hath made no Law against either, but left every Man to chuse for himself.

P. How shall I make a right Choice?

M. In Secret, it will be best to pray freely, according to the present Sense of your own Wants. For the same Reason, it is also very desirable you should pray as freely with your Family. But if you find much Perplexity of Mind, and great Defect in Expression, it may be better, for a Time, to pray with your Family by a Book. And indeed if a Book may help you to more copious and lively Expressions, both in your Closet and Family, make your best Use of it; only laying it aside, whenever you feel yourself straitened by it, and more enlarged without it. But, I beseech you, take Heed of Deadness and Formality in Prayer, which may too easily seize upon you, even when you make no Use of a Book. And if there is Need for any other Caution on this Head, I would intreat you to avoid such a Calling or Way of Life, as would be inconsistent with Family-Worship. Indeed worldly Business in general is too apt to eat out the Life and Seriousness of holy

Duties. Labour therefore to maintain in yourself and Family a Delight in God and in his Service. In Order to that, let your Prayers have much in them of Thanksgiving and Praise. Above all, beg for the Holy Spirit, to *help your Infirmities*, that you may *know what you should pray for as you ought*.



DIALOGUE VIII.

The Minister giveth his Parishioner Directions for all the publick and private Duties of the Lord's-Day.

Parishioner. O! SIR, when I was with you last, you set me a great Deal of Work, which my Conscience telleth me is the best and most important that can be done. But my naughty Heart is slow to learn, and slower to practise. Nevertheless I am come to you for more; for I am resolved to take God and Heaven for my All, and to cleave to my Covenant-Engagements. Let me therefore entreat you now to instruct me in the right Observation of the *Lord's-Day*?

Minister. I cannot so well gratify your present Request, without shewing you first our Obligations to sanctify the *Lord's-Day*. You know that Christ gave his Apostles a Commission to teach the World his Truths, and to settle his Gospel-Churches. In Order to this, he assured them they should have the infallible Conduct of the Holy Spirit; who is therefore the Author of what they did in Obedience to their



their Commission. As Christ rose from the Dead on the *first Day* of the Week, so on that Day he often appeared to his Disciples, and also on that Day he accomplished his Promise, by *filling them with the Holy Spirit*, to enable them to *Speak with other Tongues*. Thus the new World begun on that Day. And on that Day the Apostles constantly celebrated the holy Assemblies, and appointed the Churches to do so. Hence it cometh to pass, that all the Churches in the World, without Exception, ever since the Times of the Apostles, have unanimously separated and set apart the Lord's-Day for the more solemn and publick Worship of Almighty God.

P. The Obligation to sanctify this Day as you state it, is very convincing. But is it a *Sabbath*, and doth it come in the Place of the seventh Day Sabbath?

M. You have no Need to be concerned about mere Names. It is enough for you, that it is a Day set apart by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for publick Worship, and called the Lord's-Day. If by a Sabbath, you mean a Day of *Ceremonial Rest*, then the Lord's-Day is not a Sabbath; but all such Sabbaths are abolished, as Types of better Things.

P. I am the more easily satisfied of the Necessity of keeping this Day holy; because one Day in seven is the same Proportion of our Time now, as when the Law of *Moses* was made; and I am sure it is a great Blessing to Men, to be obliged, every seventh Day, to rejoice in God, to lay aside our worldly Care and Labour, and to learn the Way to everlasting Life. Alas! What would Servants and Labourers do without it? It affordeth a seasonable and suitable Employment for the Soul. I feel by Experience the great Benefit of it to myself. And I plainly perceive, that Religion is in the most flourishing State, where the Lord's-Day is most strictly observed; and greatly declineth, where this holy Day is neglected

and profaned. I am therefore very desirous to be taught the best Manner of spending this Day?

M. As you already discern, that the principal Design of the Day is publick Worship, therefore the joining in the Worship of a solemn Assembly is to be preferred before that which is more private. The Time of public Worship should be chiefly filled up with Instructions in the Doctrines of the Gospel, and with praying to, and praising, our heavenly Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The Temper of our Minds should be holy Joy, Gratitude, and Love, excited and supported by the Exercise of Faith and Hope. As it is a Day of Thanksgiving for the greatest Mercies, it should therefore employ both Heart and Tongue for God; and so far as this holy Work would be hindered by other Thoughts and Words, by other Employments or Pleasures, we should carefully abstain from them, and not on a mere ceremonial Account.

P. But be pleased, Sir, to point out to me the particular Duties of the Lord's-Day.

M. Endeavour to prepare for it before, by such a seasonable and prudent Disposall of your worldly Affairs, that they may not hinder or perplex your Mind. In the Beginning of this holy Day, joyfully remember the Resurrection of Christ, which began the glorious State of the Gospel. Rise as early then, as on any other Day. Presently retire for secret Prayer. Then read, sing, and pray with your whole Family, manifesting to them the Pleasure you feel, and how welcome the Day is to you, and all its sacred Exercises. Be early at publick Worship, nor let any of your Family be absent, but for real Necessity. Return from the House of God to secret Prayer and Meditation. At your Table be chearfully instructive, devout and edifying. After Dinner, help your Family to remember what they heard in publick, call some of them to read to you, and when you have sung a Psalm or Hymn, take them

them again to the publick Assembly. If you can, repeat to your Family the Sermons you heard; or read some lively Author to them, and spend the rest of the Evening in praying and singing with them, in catechising some, conversing freely with them all on divine Subjects, and particularly assisting them in the best Manner of spending some Time, each of them, in their own Closets. Conclude the Day, with Self-Examination, Repentance for every Failing, Thankfulness for innumerable Mercies, and chearful Repose in the Hands of your compassionate God and Saviour.

P. How may I most profitably attend on the Preaching of the Gospel?

M. Understand what you hear, be duly affected with it, remember and practise it.

P. What would be most helpful to my understanding that which I hear?

M. Read much in the Scriptures and other good Books; chuse to sit under a plain and convincing Preacher; attend with Diligence; take particular Notice of the leading Design of the Discourse, and endeavour to unite the several Parts of it in your Thoughts; if you are doubtful of the Meaning of any Thing, go to the Preacher himself for Information; especially pray that God will bless his own Word, and enable you to walk suitably to it.

P. How may I hear the Gospel with due Affection?

M. Next to your sitting under a lively Preacher, seriously consider yourself as in the Presence of God, hearing a Message from him which concerns your everlasting Salvation,—that your Time is short, and that your Soul must prosper in Proportion to your Improvement by what you hear. Shake off Drowsiness, collect your scattered Thoughts, and remember, as God sendeth you a Message, he is waiting for your determinate Answer; whether you will yield to him, or reject him? Whether you will accept of his offered

ferred Grace, or not? If you deny God but this once, you know not but he may leave you to yourself, and never make you such an Offer more. Think how the Damned in Hell would hear, if they might be tried again, and sit in your Place. Look to Jesus for his quickening Spirit. When you are at Home, preach over the Doctrine to your own Heart, labour to impress it on your Family, and spread it before God in Prayer, that his Grace may render it successful.

P. How may I hear the Gospel, so as to retain it in my Memory?

M. Besides Understanding, and Affection, you will find Method a considerable Help to your Memory. Observe the Preacher's Method, and endeavour to fix in your Mind the Heads of his Discourse, as he particularly mentioneth them, so as to write them down immediately, or when you return Home. If you forget his Expressions, yet be sure to attend to his leading Design.

P. Above all, how may I practise the Gospel Truths which I hear?

M. If you understand and remember what you hear, and especially if it take Hold of your Affections, then Practice is more likely to follow. Go to Church with an earnest Desire to have your depraved Heart renewed and your spiritual Wants supplied; as you would go for your Body to the Market, or to the Physician. When you hear the Application of a Discourse, let Conscience be especially awake, and then resolve to obey whatever God shall make known to be his Will. At Home let Conscience be permitted to receive your Resolutions, and to examine, what Graces are strengthened? Have you more affecting Views of Eternity, more lively Hope of Glory, and warmer Love to God and Christ? But take Heed of those Doctrines, which pretend to exalt Christ and Grace, to the Neglect of holy Obedience. Fly from Disputes and Controversies; and from those who scoff at Holiness, as if it was Hypocrisy; and
also

also from those who prefer superstitious Customs before the Commandments of God. If you can, take up your Abode amongst those that are eminent for practical Godliness; and never fail to examine yourself daily, how your own Practice correspondeth with your Profession.

P. In reading the Scriptures, what Directions have you to promote my Advantage?

M. Always come to them with a believing, devout, and reverential Temper of Mind, as to the Word of the living God, by which you must be ruled and finally judged. Chiefly peruse the New Testament. Let the plainest Passages explain the more difficult. Make Use of some good Expositor, which your Minister shall recommend to you. Especially let Prayer to God be always joined with your Reading the Word of God.

P. What must I do in publick Prayers and Thanksgivings?

M. Join in them, not as a bare Hearer, but with all the Desires and Praises of your Heart. As the Expressions of Prayer and Praise as well as of Preaching, will in a great Measure be human, therefore expect them to be imperfect, and treat them with Candor, and not with peevish Pride and Prejudice. Only if you think they contain any Thing contrary to the Word of God, let not that Part be your Offering; for in that Case God will not accept it at your Hands.

P. How must I receive the Lord's-Supper?

M. With *due Preparation for it*, and in a *Manner suitable to such a solemn Transaction*.

P. What is due Preparation?

M. It includeth *Acquaintance with the Design and Nature of this Institution*, some good *Evidence of your own real Christianity*, and a serious *Attention to the present Temper of your Mind*.

P. What Acquaintance is it requisite for me to have

have with the Design and Nature of this Institution, that I may be prepared to partake of it?

M. The *Design of the Lord's-Supper* is not to be a real Sacrifice of Christ, nor to turn the Bread into his real Flesh, nor the Wine into his real Blood. Nor is it to flatter Men in their presumptuous Hope, and confirm them in Wickedness, nor save them by a mere outward Performance. Nor was it ever intended by the great Master of the Feast, as a Qualification of any Man for a civil Office. But it is appointed by Christ, to be a solemn Commemoration of his Sacrifice and *Death, untill he come*; that the Church may, as it were, *have Jesus Christ before their Eyes evidently set forth, crucified among them*; and may *behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the Sin of the World*. In this holy Ordinance true Christians renew the Covenant of Grace, which they made in Baptism, and solemnly receive Christ for their Life, and yield up themselves wholly to him. Here they have such Views of the Evil of Sin, the Love of God in Christ, the Firmness of the Covenant, and the Greatness of the Gift bestowed upon them, and their own infinite Obligations, as are indeed the most suitable Means of kindling their Repentance, Desire, and Love, their Gratitude, Hope and Joy, and of strengthening their Faith and their Resolutions for new and better Obedience. Here they have Communion with God in the Exercise of their christian Graces, and receive yet more Grace from the Fulness which is in Christ; at the same Time displaying the Badge of their publick christian Profession, and their Love to and Communion with one another, and with all that love Christ. Here the consecrated Bread and Wine afford such a visible Representation of Christ crucified for our Sins, and promote such an affecting Remembrance of him, that true Christians are thereby greatly assisted in professing their sole Trust in a crucified Christ for the free and full Acceptance of their Persons and Services in the Sight of God, and
in

in comfortably concluding that Christ with all the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace are their own.

P. The Design and Nature of the Institution is very excellent. May God help me to understand these Things more distinctly ! But in Order to my farther Preparation, you say, I must have some good *Evidence of my own real Christianity*. Pray, Sir, what is good Evidence ?

M. Sincere Repentance towards God and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

P. But what must I do, if I doubt the Sincerity of my Repentance and Faith ?

M. Do your best to obtain Satisfaction, and then follow the best Judgment you can form of yourself. If you say, " I am not sure that my Repentance " and Faith are sincere ; but, as far as I know my " own Heart, I think they are ; " you may then be a Communicant. It is not Assurance, but Sincerity, that is in this Case necessary. We are all so unacquainted with our own Hearts, that if we must not speak according to our best discerning of them, without attaining to Assurance, we shall seldom be fit for any Duty.

P. How if I should be mistaken in my best Thoughts of myself, and should prove insincere ?

M. If you are not sincere, and yet think you are ; it is both your Sin to be destitute of sincere Repentance and Faith, and to indulge such Self-Flattery. Besides, your Danger is equal to your Sin ; for whether you are a Communicant or not, you cannot be in a State of Salvation without sincere Repentance and Faith.

P. If I should find it too difficult to try myself, what should I do then ?

M. Go to some experienced Christian, or judicious and faithful Minister, and lay open your Case, and desire Assistance.

P. Can any other Person tell what is in me, if I cannot tell myself ?

M. The

M. The Patient knoweth better than the Physician what he feelth, and must first tell it to the Physician; but it is the Physician's Province to explain the Nature and Tendency of the Disease, and direct to a Cure.

P. But may not an unconverted Person fancy himself a sincerely penitent Believer, and be a Communicant?

M. He that is truly willing to have God for his God, Christ for his Saviour and Lord, and the Holy Spirit for his Sanctifier, may come to the Lord's-Supper. He that is not truly willing, ought not to lie, by taking Christ in the Seal of the Covenant, while he refuseth to give Christ his Heart.

P. Must all such then be kept from the Lord's-Table?

M. Ministers may receive Hypocrites to Communion, not knowing them to be such. None but God and Conscience can know the Heart. It may be my Duty to receive such an Hypocrite, at the same Time that it is his Sin to desire it.

P. And what if the openly Profane should desire to be Communicants, or should actually be so?

M. All that are Impenitent should, either be kept, or cast out of Communion. But this must not be done without sufficient Proof and Trial, and after due Admonition, Exhortation, and Forbearance.

P. But if by one Means or another many of the Profane and Impenitent should be Communicants, may I join with such?

M. You should contribute, all you can, to set on Foot a Scriptural Church Discipline; but the bare Neglect of it by Others, is not a sufficient Cause of your Separation. Yet, if you have Opportunity, and it may be more for your Edification and Comfort, you may join yourself to a more regular Society.

P. I think, Sir, you told me, that due Preparation for the Lord's-Supper not only required me to be acquainted with the Institution, and to be a real

Christian,

Christian, but to be *careful about the present Temper of my Mind*. Pray what did you mean?

M. Your Mind should at that Time be more especially employed in reconsidering the Design and Nature of the Institution, and how holy and awful a Work it is to covenant with God and the Redeemer, in the Presence of so many Witnesses. You should also be much in Self-Examination: Whether your Repentance and Faith be sincere? Whether you heartily approve of your Covenant-Engagements, and walk suitably to them? And if you have contradicted them, whether you are deeply humbled, and earnest in Prayer for *Mercy to pardon, and Grace to help* you? You should also at the same Time consider, what you have to do, and what you are to receive, when you come to the Lord's-Table.

P. As you make a Difference between coming to the Lord's-Table, and preparing for it, and have already shewed me what Preparation is, be pleased now to tell me what I must do there?

M. I told you, the Lord's Supper was to be received in *a Manner suitable to such a solemn Transaction*, as you will easily see by what I am now to add. When you are attending the Administration, endeavour to have every christian Grace in Exercise. Let your Faith be firm in the great Truths of the Gospel. Entertain the most abasing Thoughts of your Sinfulness and Misery, and the most exalting Thoughts of Christ, and of his Blood and Righteousness, of his Spirit and Grace. Hunger and thirst after Christ, and after Communion with God through Christ. Admire the Wonders of redeeming Love. Love him who thus loved you, and rejoice in the Sense of *so great a Salvation*. Repose a chearful Confidence in Christ, and in the Covenant sealed with his Blood. Renounce every Thing that rivals Christ in your Heart, and be ready to suffer for him, who died for you. Love your Fellow-Christians, desire and promote their Union among themselves, and chearfully communicate to their

their Wants. Renew your Self-Dedication to God through Christ, and resolve *with Purpose of Heart to cleave unto the Lord*. Do all this in the lively Hope of Christ's second Coming, and of being eternally glorified with him.

P. What is there in the Lord's-Supper to excite in me this Exercise of every Grace?

M. There you will have your own Sinfulness to humble you; and Christ, with all the Blessings of Salvation, to exercise your Faith and Love, your Desire, Thankfulness and Joy. There you will have the Bread and Water of Life to hunger and thirst after; the dying Lamb of God to shew you the Deserts of Sin, and the Demands of divine Justice; and the Seal of your Pardon to make you all Gratitude and Obedience. There *your shewing the Lord's Death till he come* will cherish your *Hope of Glory*; your Love to God will kindle and flame, while you view his wonderful Love to you in all your long Enmity against him; and your *crucifying the World, and the World's being crucified to you*, will result from your affecting Sight of the Cross of Christ. There you will value christian and brotherly Love, while you contemplate the whole Church of Christ, as *one Body, partaking of that one Bread*; and while you yourself receive Christ and Salvation, all you are, and have, and can do, will be entirely devoted to him. Indeed every Thing will there contribute to invigorate your Graces; the Minister's solemn Confession, Petition and Thanksgiving; the consecrated Bread and Wine representing your Lord's Body and Blood; your being one of the Guests at such a Feast? and your consenting with all your Heart to the Engagements of the Gospel-Covenant.

P. When I go away from the Lord's Table, what should I do, and how should I behave?

M. Strive to live answerable to your solemn Vows, and therefore make Use of all other Means of Grace, that the Life and Vigour of your holy Resolutions

lutions may be constantly maintained, and especially that your Soul may be daily filled with joyful Love and Praise to him, who hath feasted you with his Salvation.

P. How often would it be proper for me to partake of the Lord's Supper?

M. It cannot be done too frequently. In the primitive Churches it was done at least every Lord's-Day. And therefore take every Opportunity for it that you can with Convenience.

P. Much of what you have been saying will depend on employing my own Thoughts in devout Meditation, for which I find myself very unfit. Be pleased to shew me how I may on any Occasion meditate for my religious Improvement.

M. The Advantages of Meditation are very great. Few Men grow wise or good without it. The best Subjects for Meditation are, either the Truths of the Gospel, and the Nature and Certainty of a future State of Happiness;—or the Love of God in the Gift of his Son, the All-Sufficiency of Christ to save, and the effectual Operations of the Holy Spirit;—or the Evil of Sin, the Danger of Temptations, and how to avoid and overcome them;—or the Nature, Number, and Tendency of our Comforts and Sorrows in our Prosperity and Adversity, together with our Nearness to Death, and Preparation for it. We should meditate as often, and as long, as will be consistent with the proper Discharge of all other Duties, and so as to refresh, and not burthen our Spirits. As for the Manner of conducting this Duty, we should observe how profitably Ministers preach, and should endeavour, as well as we can, by Meditation to preach to our own Hearts and Consciences, so as to render Sin odious to ourselves, urge ourselves to universal Holiness, and feel in ourselves every divine Comfort.

P. What Advice can you give me for secret Prayer?

M. Desire

M. Desire is the Life of Prayer. Seriously consider what your Desires are. In Order to this, you may study the Lord's Prayer. Express your Desires as plainly and fully as you can, with Respect to any particular Sin, or Mercy. Be much more sollicitous about your Hearts, than your Lips; *for out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh.* Go to God only in the Name of Christ, and trusting in his Merits and Intercession, and expecting no Communion with an holy God, but by a Mediator. When you have prayed, live suitably; since *watching and praying* are never to be separated from each other.

P. Though it is of the greatest Importance to converse with God, in the Manner you now advise; yet I must often converse with my Fellow-Creatures also, and I desire to do it always becoming a Christian. For this Purpose I beg your Directions.

M. The best Furniture you can have, is Knowledge and well-regulated Zeal. The inward Disposition is all in all. As the Man is, so will he speak. If you are with those that are able to teach you, be very attentive to what they have to say; for Pride will dispose you to be imprudently talkative. If they are silent, who should teach you, ask them some modest and seasonable Question; that they may not continue silent for Want of Opportunity or Invitation to speak. If you are with the Ignorant and Profligate, nevertheless speak with Humility and Wisdom, with Gentleness and Love. If you must reprove them, do it, if possible, alone and not before Others. Whether you are learning from Others, or endeavouring to instruct them, desire most of all to have your own Heart and their's seriously affected, and led on to pious Resolutions.

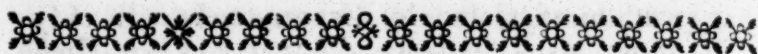
P. I have but one Thing more to desire at present, and that is concerning Days of Humiliation and Thanksgiving, whether in private or publick, how I may keep them to the best Advantage?

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M. Publick Days for Humiliation and Thanksgiving will be regulated by Others, and will only need your serious Attendance. But if you keep such Days in private, it must be left to your Discretion, both as to the Occasion for it, and the Manner of doing it. It may be very proper after falling into some great Sin; or having met with some threatening Danger, and remarkable Deliverance; or when God hath appeared to you in some distinguishing Way of Judgment and Mercy. Humiliation is expressed by Fasting and Prayer, with a penitent Heart confessing Sin, and earnestly seeking for pardoning Mercy thro' a Redeemer. Thanksgiving is expressed by temperate Feasting the Body, and especially by the Soul's rejoicing in God, celebrating his Praises for what he hath mercifully done, and chearfully renewing our Devotedness to him, and Resolutions for better Obedience. Only it should be observed, that the Weak and Infirm may humble themselves before God without Fasting, or with a small Degree of it; and the Poor, or the Sickly, may return Thanks to God without Feasting. The great End to be aimed at in Humiliation is Repentance, and in Thanksgiving is increasing Love to God, and in both of them a Life more eminently devoted to God through Jesus Christ.





DIALOGUE IX.

The Minister assisteth his Parishioner in the Views of Death, and in making suitable Preparation for it.

Parishioner. **S**IR, since I saw you, I have been with some of my Neighbours on their Death-Beds. I plainly perceive what Hindrances Men have in preparing for their latter End, when they leave it till Physicians and Friends attend them under their bodily Pains and Weaknesses. I beseech you, Sir, help me to prepare while I am in Health.

Minister. Blessed be God, for giving you such Wisdom ! There is no greater Instance of Folly, than Mens delaying their serious Preparation for Death ! O ! What a Change is it, to pass suddenly from Company, Business and Pleasures, and every Thing here, into a World we never saw, into Joys or Sorrows which must never end ! What a Stone is a hardened Heart ! What Insensibility is there in ungodly Men ! How can they forget such a Day, or think of it without awakening Resolutions ! If they believe not God's Word, nor the Life to come, why will they not hear what we have to say ? If they do believe it, what self-condemning Wretches are they ? What ! Believe such a Change is sure and near, and not prepare for it ? Believe that they must be in Heaven or Hell for ever, and yet live as if Hell and Heaven were alike to them ?

P. It

P. It is Madness indeed! And therefore a Man that loveth himself, should prepare to die.

M. How many Sermons are preached on Death, and how ineffectual? Not only at Funerals, but every Day and every Moment? How often do we tread, where so many past Generations are buried in the Dust? How are we warned by our Pains and Diseases, our Fatigues and Burthens, which make our Natures sink? How do gray Hairs tell us, like the Leaves in Autumn, that our Fall is at Hand? Our Children rise up in our Stead, because we are quitting the Stage. Every Night inviteth us to get ready for the Sleep of Death, from which Nothing will awake us but the general Resurrection. While Birds, Beasts and Fishes offer their Lives to support ours, they assure us our own will not be long. When we plow and sow for a Spring, we do but represent the burying this Body till the rising Day. Every Bell that tolleth for the Dead, is our Call to prepare to follow. Every Clock that striketh, hath a Voice to admonish delaying Sinners. Yea, every Breath we draw, and every Time our Pulse beateth. O! What Abundance of Preachers have we, to tell us of our Death, and yet Men live, as if they did not believe it, or had never been warned of their Danger!

P. Surely, Sir, it is a Thing Men need not be told, that they must die, but only how to be ready.

M. Why then are Men so surprized with the Fears of Death when it is just coming? When they begin to perceive there is no more Hope, how are they dispirited, as if they never before knew that they must die? Surely there is a Way to make Death less terrible, and why is not this Way used in Time? —Why is there so much Difference between Men's Thoughts in Health and at Death? In the former, Nothing relisheth with them but the World; in the latter, they cry, "The World is Vanity." In Health, a holy Life is odious; in Sicknefs, they adopt Balaam's Wish, *Let me die the Death of the*

Righteous, and let my last End be like his. In Health, they count Prayer a Weariness, nor will bear to be told of their Sins; but in the approach of Death, their Cry is, "Mercy! Mercy! I have sinned. O " for the Time I have lost! O that God would try " me again! O that I was sure of Heaven!" Certainly that which is best at Death, is best in Health. Nature taught the unjust Steward, when he was to be turned away, seriously to consider, where he was to go, and how to provide another Habitation. But Men that are sure they must soon leave this World for ever, cannot be prevailed upon to think seriously, where they must go next, and how their Souls may find a comfortable Abode with God.

P. Pray, Sir, mention some of the Advantages Men would find in the serious Thoughts of Death; that such Thoughts may not be looked upon as an useless Burthen.

M. O my Friend! The serious Thoughts of Death *teach Ministers how to preach, and the People how to hear.* He that thinketh he is perhaps preaching his last Sermon, will be earnest with his Hearers to repent, and believe, and turn to God. But if he thinketh of Preferments to get, and many Years to live, he will only act a Part for Christ, to win the Prize of a Worldling; he will play with Scripture, and talk of Heaven and Hell in Jest; he will by his Hypocrisy beget Hypocrites, and teach Men to treat Christianity as a Stage-Play. All Things produce their like. If Death awakeneth the Preacher, he will awaken the Hearers. Often have I arose from my Knees with Shame and Grief, to think I could pray with so little earnestness at the Door of Eternity; and have come down from the Pulpit, condemning myself for speaking with no more Affection to Men though so near to another World. Death made *Peter* earnestly *stir up* even sincere Christians, *knowing that shortly he must put off this Tabernacle.* To animate *Timothy* in his great Work, *Paul* told him,

him, *The Time of my Departure is at Hand.* And enforced his Exhortation to the *Elders of Ephesus*, by this melting Thought, *That they should see his Face no more.*—The serious Thoughts of Death will teach us all, *how to estimate the Riches and Honours of this World.* If our Hearers were all of them sure to die the next Week or Month, how easily could we preach them into a Contempt of the World? Though their Love to it might not be changed, they would nevertheless confess it to be Vanity. Were a dying Man told, “Be of good Comfort, Sir, you have had many a merry Cup; you have enjoyed every Delight that Earth could afford; your Houses and Lands are well-settled on your Children.” Would he not say? “It is my Sorrow, that I am leaving all; and my Children cannot be long after me: But where is my Soul going? And where shall the Souls of my Children go?” Thus the *rich Man in Hell* would have had his *Brethren* on Earth warned, *lest they also come the Place of Torment.* But wherever Earth is preferred to Heaven, and the Vanities of Time before eternal Salvation, even Wisdom itself will say, *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee, and then whose shall those Things be which thou hast provided?*—The serious Thoughts of Death will *abate our Pride.* Can that Man be proud, who is going to answer for all his Sins before a God that hateth Pride? Can he swell with Haughtiness to Day, who is to be in the Grave, and perhaps in Hell to Morrow? Can he be so curious and costly in adorning a Body, which must so soon be Rotteness and Stench?—Another great Advantage attending the serious Thoughts of Death, is, that it will teach us *how to spend our Time.* O precious Time! How art thou vilified by idle, voluptuous, and ungodly Men? They can play it away in a Thousand Vanities, as if God had made it too long; but when they find it is past Recovery, what are their Cries? “O for more Time! For one Year longer!”

" O that we had again the Time we have lost, in
 " Order to repent and make sure of Heaven ! O that
 " our's had been the strict and holy Lives of Saints !
 " O Time, Time, how impossible to recall one Mo-
 " ment ! How hateful a Word is Pastime ! O happy
 " Men, that have Hearts to use Time for God and
 " Christ, for the Soul and Eternity !"—Such
 Thoughts will also teach us *how to behave to each
 other*. How peaceably do Men lie together in the
 Grave ? There they have no more Contention, nor
 Cruelty, nor Oppression. And on a Death-Bed you
 will profess to forgive all the World. Then you
 dare not desire Revenge, lest God be revenged on
 you. And why will you be worse living, than dead ;
 worse in Health, than on a sick, or a dying Bed ?—
 And to add no more, the serious Thoughts of Death
 will *convince us that Sin must be avoided rather than
 Sufferings*. Die we must, whether we will or no.
 And is it not better to die for Christ, if he should
 call us to it ? Will it comfort us at Death, to think
 of the Sufferings we escaped, by the Sins we commit-
 ted ?

P. I have often wondered why the blessed God
 would not save us from dying, since Christ died in
 our Stead. But my Doubt is in a great Measure sa-
 tisfied by these Advantages attending the serious
 Thoughts of Death.

M. Though there is a Judgment to come, yet God
 will have some Justice done upon Sinners in this
 World. Though Christ suffered for us, his sinning
 Servants must suffer something. But through the
 Wisdom and Goodness of God, our Punishment is a
 Cure to the Sin that caused it. Were we to live
 many hundred Years, like the Antediluvians, what
 a wicked World would this be ? Then Covetousness,
 Ambition and Sensuality would have no Restraint.
 How dearly would Men love this World ? What
 striving would there be for it ? They that live in
 Sin, and sell Heaven for a few uncertain Years, what
 would

would they do for a Thousand Years? But the near Approach of Death curbeth the vilest of Men, and standeth, like *Haman's Gallows*, before their own Doors. When Satan hath brought them to the Pinnacle of their Ambition, shewed them the Kingdoms and Glory of the World, and drawn them to accept his Gift, and on his dreadful Terms; after all, Death assureth them of falling but so much the lower, and into so much the more tremendous Ruin. When *Belshazzar* in all his Pomp and Luxury, saw the Part of the Hand that wrote on the Plaister of the Wall of his Palace; then his Countenance was changed, and his Thoughts troubled him, so that the Joints of his Loins were loosed, and his Knees smote one against another. Nothing shews Sin to be so abominable as the Nearness of Death. Rejoice, O young Man! in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes; but know thou, that for all these Things God will bring thee into Judgment.

P. It is strange, that reasonable Men can be so unmindful of a Change so near, so certain, and of such infinite Importance.

M. All our Religion is but a continual Preparation for Death. We learn how to die well, by learning how to believe, and love, and live well. In this Sense, every Sermon should be as for a Funeral. But, alas! if we ever so earnestly entreat Men to care for their Souls, and to *work out their own Salvation*, we cannot prevail with them; no, not to remember seriously that they must die; and to live as those that firmly believe it.

P. They are unwilling to be troubled with Things of such an awful Nature.

M. Suppose you were obliged to quit your House in a few Months, and I should advise you to provide another, would it be troublesome Advice? Or, is it grievous to think of living for ever with Christ in Glory? Or, is it better to die like a Beast, and live

no more? If this miserable World is better to them than Heaven, yet since they must leave it, whether they will or no, they ought thankfully to hear of a better, and never rest till they have a Title to Heaven.

P. For my own Part, Sir, I am very desirous to know how I may in Health be ready for a safe and comfortable Death.

M. It is worth While to consider when Death is *safe*, and also when it is *comfortable*; for your Distinction hat'h more in it, perhaps, than you at first discern.—Those only die safe, and go to Heaven, who are pardoned through the Blood of Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. *Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God.*—But all who die safe, do not die comfortably. There must, in a comfortable Death, be some certain Knowledge that you have the Holy Spirit; and the Graces of the Spirit, such as Faith, Hope and Love, must be in suitable Exercise; and other Things which hinder your Comfort, must be taken out of the Way.

P. I was far from thinking there was so much Difference between safe and comfortable. But why is a safe Death desirable?

M. He that is not ready for a safe Death, and dieth so, is lost for ever. He is indeed unready for every Thing, for any Duty, or any Suffering; he is losing his Time, and only preparing for Hell. Therefore no other Care or Business, no Profit, Honour, or Pleasure should afford him any Rest, till he hath got his Soul into a safe Condition, till he is converted, and made holy, and is ready to die.

P. And where is the Importance of dying comfortably?

M. Comfort is founded in the Knowledge of Safety. Uncertainty is painful. To believe a Heaven and Hell, and not know which will be our's, is a dreadful Thought. To have all earthly Comforts fail, and be utterly doubtful of everlasting Comfort,

is an uneasy State. All the Enjoyments of this World cannot comfort a wise Man, unless he can foresee their End, and daily fetch Comfort from Heaven. Was he called to suffer for Christ, the Terrors of Death would prevent him; for how can he willingly go out of this Life, if he hath not some considerable Hopes of a better? But when he is comforted with the Thoughts of *being for ever with the Lord*, what need he fear? What hath he to trouble him? How quietly may he sleep? How easily may he suffer? How joyfully may he live or die?

P. Now I see that a safe Death is necessary, and a comfortable Death unspeakably important. And in both Respects to get ready to die, must be the principal Work we have to do.

M. Life itself is Nothing but the Time allotted us to prepare for eternal Life. Every Hour is lost, that is not spent in such Preparation. The whole of a Christian's Life must be holy and devout, though he is not always in Acts of Worship. He must always be seeking the Glory of God, and the Salvation of his Soul, under the Conduct of the Word and Spirit of Christ. As the Lord Jesus came from Heaven, and is ascended thither, so he sendeth his Spirit into our Hearts, to prepare them for Heaven. Therefore Death, which is our passing into Heaven, must be in our Eye, in all the Exercises of Religion, and in all the Business of our Lives; and all those Opinions and Practices are to be avoided, which no Way tend to prepare us for a safe and comfortable Death.

P. I am fully persuaded I ought to mind Nothing so much as Preparation for Death; but pray, Sir, how is this Preparation to be made?

M. It must principally be done *in your Health*, and in some Measure *when you are sick*. While you are in Health, prepare for Death, *by your Care and Diligence to strengthen your Faith in the Truth of Scripture, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Life to come.* Secret Doubts on these Heads will give great Ad-

vantage to the most dangerous Temptations. Uncertainties here will scarcely prevail against Sense, and the Influence of present Things, nor sufficiently comfort a departing Soul; but, like Water cast on the Fire, will quench Hope and Joy. Many powerful Arguments might easily be suggested to confirm your Faith; but if you attend to the sacred Impressions of the Holy Spirit, first on the Scripture, and next on your own Heart, and the sanctifying Change made in all your Temper and Conversation, you will then *have the Witness in yourself*, even the nearest, the surest, and the most constant Witness, that Christ is true, and that he is preparing you for a better Life. —*Sincerely repent of every known Sin.* Nothing maketh Death so frightful, as Guilt. Nothing so reasonably exciteth Fear, as unpardoned Sin. Nothing should make us doubt of pardoning Mercy, but our doubting the Sincerity of our Repentance and Faith in Christ. Therefore spare not Sin, but repent without Delay; confess it freely, and forsake it resolutely. *The Sting of Death is Sin.* And Forgiveness is promised to true Repentance. —*Trust your Soul, with all its Interests, in the Hand of Jesus Christ your Saviour.* He is the Owner of it by the Right of Redemption. He is in Heaven, and both Heaven and Earth are in his Power. He that saved you from Sin and Satan, will save you from the Torments of Hell. If Angels rejoiced at your Conversion, Christ and Angels will joyfully receive your victorious Soul *to the Spirits of just Men made perfect.* Christ hath testified his Love at so dear a Rate, that you should not call it in Question. To save your Soul, is his proper Work and Office, and even his Covenant. He himself is your Judge. *He hath the Keys of the unseen World, and of Death.* His Work in Heaven is to intercede for you, and prepare a glorious Mansion for your Reception. You are by Grace and Reconciliation made an *Heir of God, and joint-Heir of Christ*; and will he not give you that, to which he hath

hath already given you so much Right? Are his Love and Promise, his Oath and Seal, Nothing to you? He would never have given you a heavenly Mind and Desire, nor have set you on seeking Heaven, if he would not actually bring you thither. You must live and die by Faith in Christ, if you would live and die in a well-grounded Peace.—*Devote yourself entirely to God, and live to please him, and to do good to all around you.* Thus your Conscience will bear Witness at Death, that, notwithstanding your Infirmities, you answered the great End of Life, in living to God, and not in gratifying the Flesh, nor inordinately striving to be rich, or to secure the Honour and Applause of Men. And there is no Evidence in our Favour so full and satisfying, as *the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World.* O that we duly considered how much a Life of total Resignation and Devotedness to God hath a Tendency to produce a peaceful and joyful Death!

P. But I have often heard, Sir, that we are to put no Trust in any Work or Holiness of our own, nor derive our Comfort from it.

M. Thus far I acknowledge what you say, that we are not to expect our Justification and Acceptance, either wholly, or in Part, from any Work or Holiness of our own; because Nothing less than Perfection of Holiness can justify us, according the Law of Works. But since Christ hath fully satisfied for our Violation of that Law, and will now judge us by his Law of Grace; therefore he freely justifieth us, and at the same Time graciously rewardeth us according to our sincere and holy Obedience. Our own Holiness or Works must have no share in the Honour due to any Work of the Father, Son, or Spirit. If any Thing of our own cometh in Competition with Christ, or in Opposition to him, we must not only distrust it, but even reject it with Indigna-

tion. None trusted more entirely in Christ than St. Paul; and yet he rejoiced in the Testimony of his Conscience concerning his own sincere and holy Obedience. We well know how much Unbelief and Impenitence, a profane and ungodly Life, have a Tendency to distress us; and why should not we take Comfort in being delivered from such dreadful Causes of Distress?

P. I hope, Sir, you have made me understand, how I may depend wholly on divine Grace, and yet take Comfort in my own Sincerity and Obedience. Be pleased now to go on with the Directions you were giving me for a safe and comfortable Death.

M. Let me therefore in the next Place caution you, to take Heed of quenching the Holy Spirit. Whatever good we do in Health or Sickneſs, it muſt be by his gracious Influences. There is no effectual Knowledge, no holy Love to, or Delight in God, no divine Life in our Souls, but what is wrought by this illuminating, ſanctifying and quickening Spirit. This heavenly Guest muſt be tenderly cheriſhed, if you would have the *Joy of the Holy Spirit*, either, in Health or Sickneſs, in Life or Death.

P. I ſhould be glad to know what it is to cheriſh, or to quench the Holy Spirit?

M. Chriſtians do not ſufficiently conſider, that, in the preſent State, divine Rewards and Punishments chiefly conſiſt in giving, or withholding, the Spirit's gracious Influences. *Reſiſting the Spirit* is our moſt heinous Sin, and for which we pay deareſt. The Punishment is the more dangerous, the leſs it is perceived and lamented. The Spirit is awfully withdrawing, when Men gradually loſe their Love to Holineſs, grow indifferent to the Things of God, formal in Acts of Worſhip, more bold with Sin, and more worldly-wiſe in pleading for every ſinful Inclination. One groſs Sin, or many leſſer Iniquities, may ſo quench the Spirit, as never to be recovered in

in the same Degree of Strength and Comfort through the Remainder of Life.

P. Alas! If this be my Case, what must I do?

M. Deal faithfully with yourself by deep Repentance. Search diligently into your own Heart. Mortify your favourite Lusts. Fly from the Temptations which have been most prevalent. Return to neglected Duties. converse with the most lively Christians. Especially be fervent in Prayer, that *God will not take his Holy Spirit from you, but restore unto you the Joy of his Salvation.*

P. But how shall I know whether I have the Spirit, or whether I have less or more?

M. This is to be known by your Love to God and Man, and your Desire and Endeavour to do good, and to abound in the Fruits of Righteousness.

P. What are the best Evidences of sincere Love to God and Man?

M. Your Love to God and Man is sincere, if you are more desirous of knowing and practising the Word of God, and of being perfectly holy in Heaven, than of having the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of Earth;—if you pray and strive for *the Coming of the Kingdom of God, and the Doing his Will*, in the Prosperity of the Church, and the Holiness and Happiness of all Men, more than for any secular Interest of your own; and if all this be your constant Pleasure. Indeed, such Love to God and Man is the true Excellence of Christianity, and even of human Nature.—This remindeth me of another Direction for a safe and comfortable Death, and that is, to *live continually in a thankful Sense of the Love of God to your own Soul.* Daily consider the Greatness of that Love, both in the Nature of God, and in the Blessings of the Gospel, and also in all your own particular Experiences of his Love. This will make Heaven desirable, and overcome the Fears of Death. This is a Fruit of Faith, more excellent than Faith itself. This delighteth the Soul, and powerfully draweth it

to God, even by the Experiences of his Love and Goodness. And you will easily believe there is a Heaven for you, when you enjoy such Foretastes of it.—*Live also in Heaven, while you are upon Earth, by frequent heavenly Contemplation.* A great Part of Preparation for Death lieth in this. If you are a Stranger to Heaven in Health, you will be too much so in Sicknes. How can the Soul be pleased with the Thoughts of going to a God, a Place, a Society, and Employment, to which it hath always been a Stranger? To *lay up Treasure in Heaven*, is to live so, as will most effectually secure the heavenly Reward; *for where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also.* If you are *risen with Christ*, you will *seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right Hand of God*; and will *set your Affection on Things above, not on Things on the Earth*, and your *Conversation will be in Heaven.* There is your Father, Saviour and Comforter, your Home and Happiness, your glorified Friends, your best Interest and chief Business. Read, hear and pray, as if Heaven were open to your View. Resist Temptations, and transact worldly Business, like a Traveller in his Way Home. Often set before your Eyes the Certainty, Nearness, and unconceivable Splendor of the Heavenly Glory. Think of the Millions in Triumph there, while you are here in Fears and Cares. Think of those, who once were compassed with Infirmities, but are now freed from all. Think how holy Souls see the glorious Jesus, know God and his Works, love, and praise, and rejoice with holy Angels. Think of your pious Acquaintance, who are gone thither before you, and walk with them, as it were, in the Streets of the New Jerusalem. Surely with such Thoughts in Health, Death will never be unwelcome.—*Live also a Life of Mortification.* Let Nothing in this World be too dear and pleasing to you. If you are fond of any Thing here, Parting will be the more difficult. But if you *crucify the*
Flesh

Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts; and become indifferent to the Things of Time and Sense, and be much conversant with unseen Glories, there will be little to entangle and hinder the Willingness of your departing Souls.—Get some good Assurance of your own Sincerity. If you doubt of this, it will excite your Fear, and make you unwilling to die. Examine your Repentance, Faith, Love, and every christian Grace. When you trace the Evidences of your Sincerity, bless God, and rejoice in his Love, and watch and pray, that you may not lose your Attainments, but *forgetting what is behind, may reach unto that which is before.* When you know that you are passed from Death to Life, you are fortified against most Temptations to shrink back from your eternal Rest.—And if the Soul hath all Things in Order for dying, it will be easy to *settle your worldly Affairs.* You will prudently contrive, that there may be no Contention about your Estate when you are dead. If you have wronged any, you will not fail to make full and speedy Restitution. If you are at Variance with any, you will do all in your Power to be reconciled, and though they refuse to forgive you, yet you will unfeignedly forgive and pray for them.

P. O that in Health I may thus prepare for Death! Now, Sir, be pleased to tell me what may be done, even in Sickneſs?

M. When the Body is sinking under Pains and Sorrows, there is very little to be done for the Soul. Health is the best Time for every Work, and especially for this. Yet if the Nature and Length of the Disease will admit, something may be done. And if it be one, who hath made no Sort of Preparation in Health, but his Affliction hath seized him in his unconverted State; alas! what shall I say? In such Circumstances it will be very difficult to know, whether Repentance is merely the Effect of alarming Fears, or of a new Heart. Such a one hath many Things to learn, much Employment for his Thoughts, and a
great

great Change to be made in him, before he can be fit to die. How improper for all this is a little Time of Sickness ! There is however some Hope, and while there is Life and Hope, we must do our best.

P. I tremble to think of such a one. Pray, Sir, what could you say to him ?

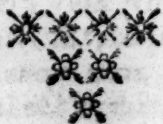
M. Say ? It would be necessary, were it in his last Moments, to endeavour to convince him, that till he feelth his Need of a Saviour and Sanctifier, he is in an unconverted State, destitute of the Favour of God, and exposed to everlasting Destruction. But if he humbly acknowledgeth his Sinfulness and Misery, I would affectionately offer Christ and Salvation to him, with all the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace. I would urge him to give his immediate and hearty Consent to have God for his reconciled Father, Christ for his Saviour and Lord, and the Holy Spirit for his Sanctifier and Comforter ; and to resolve, if he recovered, to live to God through Christ, in all new and holy Obedience. I would solemnly assure him, that Nothing could deprive him of Pardon and eternal Life, but his refusing Christ, and Grace, and Holiness. I would beseech him to think of the infinite Love of God in providing a Saviour for him, and how exceeding great and precious the Promises are, and what unspeakable Glory there is in Heaven for every sincerely penitent and believing Soul. Then I would help him in lifting up his Heart to God in Prayer, and shew him the infinite Importance of praying for himself, that his Heart may be made truly humble and contrite, penitent and believing, and be effectually converted from all sinful Love, to the Love of God and Christ, of Heaven and Holiness. I would conclude with repeated Assurances, that if his late Repentance and Conversion would produce a holy Life, in Case he recovered, and was not the mere Result of a frightened Conscience, he would undoubtedly be saved.

P. This

P. This would be faithful and tender, and most likely to do good, if it were not too late. But supposing, Sir, you were visiting some real Convert, who had long before been preparing for Death, and was now in his last Illness; permit me once more to ask, what Advice would you give such a one, in Order to his farther Preparation?

M. My Advice would be to this Purpose.—Consider your Sickness, as a Fruit of Sin, yet wisely and graciously designed by your heavenly Father, to produce *the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness*, and a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. Secure this Advantage of Affliction, and it will sweetly reconcile you to the Disposals of Providence.—Pray for divine Grace and Consolation suited to your weak and low Condition.—Renew your Repentance towards God, and your Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and warn all about you to set their Hearts on Heaven, and to make it the Business of their Lives to prepare for Death. Tell them what Evil you have found in Sin, what Vanity in the World, what Goodness in God and Holiness, what Comfort in Christ and the Promises, and how miserable you had now been, if you had never cared for your Soul till now. Beg of them to live, as they would die; to give their Hearts to God in Christ; to redeem their precious Moments, and make sure of everlasting Life.—Recollect your past Mercies; to be born in a Land and Age of Gospel-Light; to have had early Conviction and Conversion, Pardon and Reconciliation, Deliverance from Sin and Hell, and lively Hopes of Glory. Let your Views of the Goodness and Love of God to you, fill you with Contentment and Satisfaction, and turn your Fears into fervent Love to Christ, and ardent Desires to be with him.—Be swallowed up in the delightful Thoughts of the everlasting Rest, to which you are going; where you neither shall sin, nor fear, nor suffer any more; but love and rejoice, more than you can now conceive

ceive or wish; and where God and Christ shall be more to you, than Light to your Eyes, or the Soul to the Body.—Resign up your Soul into the Hand of your God and Saviour, without one distrusting Care for yourself. Trust a God who is Love itself, and your own Father and God. Trust a Saviour, who hath done and suffered so much for you, and for Millions before you. Take not one anxious Thought about your corruptible Flesh, or the Labyrinths in the World of Spirits; but chearfully commit all to God in Christ.—And if you have Capacity for expressing it, magnify the Goodness of God, and speak well of his Name, his Word, his Ways. Let others see there is a Reality in the Comforts of Faith and Hope, and that the Death of the Righteous hath enough in it, to make their Life also desirable. As your Tongue was given you to praise the Lord, and hath but a little While more to speak, exert all its remaining Strength in his Praise, and in telling what you have found him to be, and in celebrating the Glories of his Kingdom into which you are entering, that Others may catch the sacred Flame, and feel something of your Hopes and Desires. Imitate your dying Saviour, *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit.* And pray, like the first Martyr, *Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.*



FORMS

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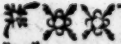


FORMS of PRAYER

FOR THE

FAMILY and the CLOSET.

A Morning Prayer for a Family.


AL

LMIGHTY and most merciful God,

A

 the Creator of Heaven and Earth; we


 desire humbly to adore thee, as the For-


 mer of our Bodies, and the Father of our
 Spirits. Thou art good to all, and thy
 tender Mercies are over all thy Works. Thy bright-
 est Glories are manifested to Angels, and the Spirits
 of just Me made perfect; but, through thy Grace
 in Jesus Christ, thou wilt dwell with Men upon
 Earth.

We are ashamed in thy holy Presence to think of
 our Sin and Folly. Thou hast made us to know and
 love, to seek and serve thee here, and to enjoy thee
 for ever; but we have forgotten and neglected our
 God, our Souls, and a blessed Immortality, for the
 Sake of this perishing World. Thy Law is perfectly
 holy, just and good; but we have broken it in
 Thought,

Thought, Word and Deed. We have even set light by thy dear and only begotten Son, though he died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification.

O thou God and Father of Mercies, enter not into Judgment with us, lest we become as miserable, as we are sinful. Look upon us in Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, and make our scarlet and crimson Sins white as Snow. Blot out all our Transgressions, heal all our Backslidings, receive us graciously, and love us freely. Give us that godly Sorrow for Sin, which worketh Repentance unto everlasting Salvation. Justify us freely by thy Grace, through the Redemption, which thy dear Son hath wrought out for all penitent and believing Sinners. Better we had never been born, than die in an impenitent and unconverted State. Lord, we beg thy pardoning and sanctifying Grace, through the Merits and Intercession of our Redeemer. Thou hast pitied and saved Millions of perishing Sinners, O pity and save us also, that we may glorify thy Grace for ever! Thou delightest not in the Death of Sinners, but rather that they return and live. Hadst thou been unwilling to shew Mercy, thou wouldst not have given such a Price for our Ransom, nor have entreated us to be reconciled to thee. We have no Cause to doubt thy Truth or Goodness, but we fear lest our Unbelief and Disobedience, our Hypocrisy and Carnality, should be our Ruin. Save us, we beseech thee, from Satan and this tempting World; but especially save us from our own deceitful Hearts.

Thy Mercy hath spared us to another Day. Blessed be God, our Day of Grace is still continued. We thank thee for Safety and Repose through the Night, and for the Health and Chearfulness of this Morning. Teach and enable us this Day, to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World. Help us daily to lay up Treasure in Heaven, and make sure of eternal Life; that when Christ, who is our
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Life, shall appear, we also may appear with him in Glory. Let our Hearts be established by Grace, that we may faithfully discharge the Duties of our several Places and Relations, and may abound in every Fruit of Righteousness, which is by Christ Jesus to the Praise and Glory of God.

Pity the Nations that know thee not, and the Families that call not on thy Name. Let thy Gospel run and be glorified through the whole Earth, that every Land may be Immanuel's Land. Continue Peace and Plenty, and especially thy Word and Worship in our Country. Bless our King, and all in Authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty. Make the Ministers of the Gospel wise to win Souls, faithful and abundantly successful. Let all thy Churches be edified, and, walking in the Fear of the Lord, and in the Comforts of the Holy Spirit, be multiplied.

Help us, as a Family, to walk together in Holiness and Love, cheerfully bearing each other's Burdens, and so fulfilling the Law of Christ. Favour us and our dear Friends and Relatives with every Blessing of Health and Prosperity, so far as shall best promote spiritual and eternal Welfare.

Give us this Day our daily Bread, and true Contentment with it. Forgive us our daily Sins, and let thy Love and Mercy constrain us to love thee above all, Jesus Christ in Sincerity and Truth, and our Neighbour as ourselves. Let our Obedience to thee be the Delight of our Souls, and all our Thoughts and Affections, all our Words and Actions be holy and unblameable before thee in Love. And let the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God the Father, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with us this Day, and for evermore. *Amen.*

Another

Another Morning Prayer for a Family.

MOST gracious Father, we come to thee, encouraged by thy Precepts and Promises, and by the Mediation of thy dear Son, to humble ourselves at thy Footstool, by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving. We would account it our unspeakable Privilege to have this Liberty of Access to thee, and our best Business and greatest Comfort thus to worship thee daily in our Family.

We thank thee for making us capable of knowing, loving and serving our Creator, and of enjoying thee in eternal Blessedness. Though by our Apostacy from thee, and Rebellion against thee, we have destroyed ourselves; yet, adored be thy Mercy, in thee is our Help found. We thank thee for laying Help for us upon one, who is mighty, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. We thank thee for Jesus Christ, and a glorious Gospel; and especially that Christ and Salvation by him have been made in some Degree precious to our Souls. How great was thy Mercy, which spared our Lives, and kept us out of Hell, while we were long going in the Paths of the Destroyer! How much greater was thy Mercy, in bringing any of us to a serious Sense of our past Sinfulness, in awakening us to true Repentance, and enabling us to seek after thy Favour and Friendship, as our highest Happiness!

But we have ill requited thee for all thy Goodness and Love. The Sins of our Hearts and Lives, of our Childhood, Youth, and riper Age testify against us. Long did we forget God and our Souls, Christ and Eternity, and live in Ignorance and Unbelief. We were long deceived by earthly Vanities, and resisted too long the Motions of thy Holy Spirit. And even since any of us have known thee, and engaged ourselves to thee, we have too often returned to Folly, and

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and have been cold and negligent in loving and serving thee.

If thou, Lord, shouldest mark Iniquities ; O Lord, who shall stand ? But there is Forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Wash us in the Blood, and accept us for the Merits, of thy dear Son. We dare not come to God but in the Name of Christ, nor expect any Mercy but for his Sake. Give us thy Holy Spirit to dwell in our Hearts by Faith, to fill us with heavenly Love, and strengthen us for all holy Obedience. Let our Thoughts and Affections be fixed on God and Christ, on divine Precepts and Promises. Let Grace regulate and sanctify all our Words and Actions, our Senses, Appetites and Passions. Help us to love our Neighbours as ourselves, and to do all the good in our Power, both to their Souls and Bodies. Take away our Pride, and cloath us with Humility, and put upon us the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit. Deliver us from every Snare of Sin, and every hurtful Lust. Especially save us from our own Iniquity, and the Sin that most easily besets us.

We beseech thee to favour us with all suitable Helps for improving us in Knowledge and Holiness, and add thy Blessing to them. Make us faithful and circumspect in all the Duties of our several Places and Relations. Dispose of all our worldly Affairs, as shall be most for thy Glory, and the good of our Souls. Mercifully recover those that are in Sicknefs and Pain, succour the Tempted, supply the Necessitous, comfort the Mourners, be a Father to the Fatherless, and a Husband to the Widow, and a present Help in every Time of Trouble.

Continue thy Gospel in our Land. Furnish all thy Churches with wise, holy, and useful Ministers, and succeed their Labours for promoting Knowledge and Righteousness, Truth and Peace. Bless the King, and all in Authority, and teach them to govern, and us to obey, as the Subjects of thee the King of Kings,
and

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and the high and only Potantate. Let all the Kingdoms of the Earth become the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. Send the Gospel to them that want it, and make it successful to them that have it. Heaven and Earth are continued by thy Power, and all Things in them are ordered by thy Wisdom. Thou art great, O Lord, and greatly to be feared. Thou art good, and worthy of perfect and universal Love and Obedience. Thy Glory shines in all thy Works, but above all in our glorious Redeemer and in the Church triumphant, where Angels and Saints perfectly and eternally love and praise thee.

We humbly adore and bless thee for all thine undeserved and forfeited Mercies to our Souls and Bodies, and particularly for our Safety and Repose the last Night, and the Health and Comfort with which we bow at thy Footstool this Morning. Keep us in thy Fear, Faith and Love all this Day. Guard our Souls from Sin, and our Bodies from every Thing that would hinder us in thy Service. We desire to live as in thy Presence, and do all to please thee, and secure the Salvation of our own and others Souls, and to account this our highest Honour and Happiness. We intreat thee to pardon our Sins, accept our Services, and give an Answer of Peace to our Prayers, for the Sake of thy dear Son, and our only Redeemer and Saviour, who hath taught us to pray unto thee, as *Our Father, which art in Heaven, &c.* Amen.

An Evening Prayer for a Family.

O GOD, thou art infinitely glorious and gracious. Though mortal Eyes cannot behold thee, nor any Creature comprehend thee, yet all Things are naked and open to thine Eyes, with whom we have to do. Thou see'st all the Secrets of our
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Hearts, and our Sins and Sorrows, our Wants and Wishes are perfectly known to thee. O that our Souls were more fit for thy holy Presence, and for this solemn Approach to thee! Thou hast provided a new and living Way in which miserable Sinners may acceptably draw nigh to thee, and in this Way may we find thee, not as a consuming Fire, but as a reconciled God and Father in Christ.

Thou madest Man upright, but we have sought many Inventions. Sin hath corrupted all our Powers, and perverted the Design of our Creation. We have called thee our King and Ruler; but have rebelled against thee. Thou art Love itself; but our Hearts have been alienated from thee, and have delighted in Vanity. This deceitful World hath had too much of our Love and Care, our Desires and Pursuits, as if it had been all-sufficient, while God and Heaven have been neglected. We have lived, as if thy Word was not faithful, nor the Joys of Heaven real and substantial. We have too often drawn nigh to thee with our Lips, while our Hearts have been far from thee. Our Family, which should have been a Church of God, hath been too much filled with Sin and Folly. We have not loved our Neighbours as ourselves, nor done to Others, as we would have had them do to us. Inordinate Selfishness, Pride and Sensuality have had too much Power over us. We have been backward to love and forgive those that injured us. We have misimproved our Time and Talents, and done but little good in the World. And though thy Mercy to us in a Redeemer hath been wonderful, we have neglected the great Salvation. How carelessly have we heard and read thy Gospel! How little have the Love and Sufferings of Christ affected us! Alas! Our Hearts are ever prone to make light of Sin and Guilt, of Christ and Grace.

But deal with us, O Lord, not according to our Iniquities, but according to the Multitude of thy tender Mercies. Where our Sin hath abounded, let
thy

thy Grace much more abound. Thou didst seek us, when we sought not thee. We now seek thee by thine own merciful Appointment. Thou givest us the very Desires, which we pour out before thee. While we were thine Enemies, thou gavest thy Son to save us; and there is enough in his meritorious Sacrifice, to expiate our Sins, and justify penitent Believers in thy Sight. Thou hast promised thy Spirit to sanctify our Souls. We therefore beseech thee to take away our Hearts of Stone, and give us Hearts of Flesh; create within us clean Hearts, and renew within us right Spirits. Let all we are, and have, be entirely thine, and sincerely devoted to thee. We would esteem it our greatest Happiness in this Life, to know thee better, and love thee more. Shed abroad thy Love in our Hearts, by the Holy Spirit given unto us. Fill us with every Child-like Affection to thee, as our reconciled God and Father in Christ. Help us to seek thy Glory in all we do, and make it our chief Aim to please thee, to promote thy Kingdom, and do thy Will.

Look with Pity upon a lost World. Convert Heathen and Infidel Nations, and set up the Throne of Christ there, where Satan's seat hath so long been. Spread the Triumphs of redeeming Love through the whole Earth. Let all the Churches of Christ be edified, and walking in the Fear of the Lord, and Comforts of the Holy Spirit, let them be multiplied. Bless the Land of our Nativity. Prolong the Life, direct the Counsels, and prosper the Reign of our King. Make all that are in Places of publick Trust faithful to the publick Interest; and may all that bear the Sword of Justice be a Terror to evil Doers, and a Protection and Praise to them that do well. Own the Ministers of the Gospel in their Work, and help them to watch for Souls, as those that must give an Account to the great Shepherd.

We commit ourselves to thee this Night, and desire to dwell in the secret Place of the most High,
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and to abide under the Shadow of the Almighty. Let no Evil befall us, nor any Plague come nigh our Dwelling. Refresh our Bodies with quiet and comfortable Rest. Lift on our Souls the Light of thy Countenance; which is better than Life. On our Beds, help us to commune with thee and our own Hearts. Restore us to another Day in Safety, and prepare us for the Duties and Events of it. Bless us as a Family, and let all that belong to us belong to Christ, that we who live together on Earth, may be for ever with the Lord in heavenly Glory.

Comfort and relieve all that are in Sorrow and Affliction, and lay no more upon them than thou wilt enable them to bear. Fit the Dying for Death, and give them an abundant Entrance into the promised Rest, where there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, nor Pain; but the former Things shall be done away for ever.

We intreat thee to do for us, and ours, and for the whole Israel of God, abundantly above all that we ask or think, for the Sake of our blessed Redeemer and Saviour, who is the Lord our Righteousness and Strength, and in us the Hope of Glory. To him, with thee, O Father, and the Spirit of all Grace and Truth, we desire to ascribe Glory and Praise for ever. *Amen.*

Another Evening Prayer for a Family.

O THOU high and lofty One, who inhabitest Eternity, whose Name is Holy, and who dwellest in the high and holy Place! Thou hast promised to dwell here below with humble and contrite Spirits, to revive the Spirit of the humble, and to revive the Heart of the contrite Ones. Invited by thy Goodness, and constrained by our own Necessities, we bow before thee, humbly confessing our Sins, with thankful Acknowledgments of thy Mercies, and earnest

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nest Cries for Grace to help us in every Time of Need.

We mourn to think of our unconverted State, and how long we walked contrary to thy holy Law, and gratified the Inclinations of our corrupt and depraved Nature. We have been Lovers of sinful Pleasure, more than Lovers of God and Holiness; and have idolized the Vanities of this perishing World. We have abused thy Patience, Forbearance and Long-suffering, by which thou hast been leading us to Repentance. We have hardened our Hearts against the Warnings of thy Word and Spirit, thy Providences and our own Consciences. We have put far from us the Day of Affliction and Death. We have cared more for our Bodies, than for our immortal Souls; and for the Things of Time, than how to be saved from Hell, and live with Christ in heavenly Glory. We have contented ourselves with the Form of Godliness, without the Life and Power of it. If any of us have been turned from Sin to Holiness, from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God; how long did we resist thy Spirit and Grace, and hinder our own Conversion! If any of us are engaged in the Bonds of thy Covenant, yet alas! how cold is our Love, how inconstant our Obedience, and how wavering and divided are our Hearts! We have too little differed in Temper and Conversation from the Ungodly, and hence it is that we have tasted so little of the Joys of thy Salvation.

But, O thou God of Salvation! come over the Mountains of our Unworthiness, and visit our Souls with thy forgiving Love. Though our Sins deserve thine eternal Wrath, yet thy Son hath died for us, and in him there is infinite Worthiness. For his Sake, justify us by thy Grace, adopt us into thy Family, and make us Partakers of the divine Nature. Let thy holy Spirit fill our Minds with Faith and Wisdom, and our Hearts with Holiness and Love; even with Love to thyself, thy Son, thy Word and Ways, and to all that bear thy holy Image. Let the
Thoughts

Thoughts of thy Love to us in Christ, of our Pardon and Peace with thee, and of the promised heavenly Joys, be our daily Cordial under all the Afflictions and Sorrows of Life. Teach us to redeem our precious Time, to lay up Treasure in Heaven, and to seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and to trust thy Promise, that all other Things shall be added to us, so far as they are for our good and thy Glory. Help us to bear all Sufferings with Faith, Hope and Patience. Make us Conquerors over every Temptation, and preserve us to thy heavenly Kingdom.

Extend thy Mercies to the Nations and Families of the Earth, that are involved in Ignorance and Superstition, in Idolatry and Will-Worship. Say to the North, give up; and to the South, keep not back; bring thy Sons from far, and thy Daughters from the Ends of the Earth. Let every Knee bow to Christ the Saviour, and every Tongue confess to him. Put away all Persecution and Oppression for Righteousness Sake. Purge thy Churches from all Corruptions in Doctrine, Discipline, or Practice. Never take thy Gospel from *Great Britain*, and the Countries belonging to it. Pour down the best of Blessings on our King, with all his Nobles, Judges and Magistrates, and help them to suppress Vice and Profaneness, and promote serious Godliness. Make the Ministers of the Gospel as burning and shining Lights, to scatter Ignorance and Error, and lead Souls to Christ and Glory. Sanctify the Afflictions of the Afflicted, to take away Sin, and to make them Partakers of thy Holiness; and save Others from the peculiar Snares of worldly Prosperity.

Let thy Blessing be on this Family, on all our Bodies and Souls, on all our Cares and Concerns. Ever keep us in Love and Peace, and in every holy Duty to thee and to one another. We thank thee for the Mercies of our past Lives, and particularly of this Day. Thou hast favoured us with another Day for Repentance, and Preparation for Death and

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Eternity. Lord, forgive all our Sins of Omission and Commission. Protect us this Night from every Evil. Refresh us with Rest in Sleep. Let our Meditation be of thee in the Night-Watches, and thy Comforts ever delight our Souls. Prepare us for the Duties and Events of the Morrow. May we live every Day in thy Fear, and to thy Glory; that we may live with thee in a glorious eternal Day, where there shall be Night no more for ever. Hear and answer us in all our imperfect Petitions and Supplications, for the Sake of our all-prevailing Intercessor at thy right Hand, in whose Name and Words we farther call upon thee, *Our Father, which art in Heaven, &c.*

A Family Prayer for the Lord's - Day Morning.

GLORIOUS Jehovah! thou art infinitely above the Praises of Angels, and much more of sinful Mortals. They that are far from thee, shall perish; but it is good for us to draw near to thee. Thy Mercy has appointed this holy Day, that thy Love and Praise may employ our Minds, and be a Foretaste of our eternal Rest. Breathe upon us the Spirit of Light, Life and Love, and quicken us to this holy and heavenly Work, and accept us in it, through thy dear Son.

Thou art the King eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise, living and true God, the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth. Thou didst make all Things out of Nothing by the Word of thy Power, and dost every Moment support and preserve the Works of thine Hand. How manifold are thy Works, O Lord, in Wisdom hast thou made them all! Thou hast made Man the noblest Inhabitant of this lower World, but a little beneath Angels, even with Capacities for knowing, loving and serving thee. Thou wast his Father, Benefactor and chief Good, to engage

gage him to thyself in Resignation, Love and Obedience. Thou gavest him a holy, just and good Law, that he might please and enjoy thee. But Man soon lost his Purity and Excellence by departing from thee. Thus did Man foolishly requite the Lord, and forsake the Rock of his Salvation. Thus by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin. But how did thy Mercy rejoice against Judgment! How didst thou add to the Sentence of Death the Promise of a Redeemer! According to thy Promise, Jesus took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men. O wonderful condescending Love! Angels proclaimed it, and with Admiration look into it. How should we then bow at thy Footstool in Self-Abasement, and rise high in thankful Praises this Day, not only for creating Power and Goodness, but for redeeming Grace and Love!

Adored be our Immanuel! He came as the Light and Life of the World. He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from Sinners, for such an High Priest became us. He taught us by his perfect Doctrine and Example. He made himself by his Sufferings and Death a Sacrifice and Propitiation for our Sins. O matchless Love, that for Enemies he should lay down his precious Life! He hath conquered and sanctified Death and the Grave to all Believers. He hath procured for us a Covenant of Grace; and sealed it with his Blood. Now, O Father, there is Forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Thou hast so loved the World, as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting Life. Thou wast in Christ, reconciling the World unto thyself, not imputing to penitent and believing Sinners their Iniquities. Thou art, by thy Ministers, beseeching Sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to thee. Thou refusest none that come to thee by Christ. To as many as receive him, thou givest Power to become the Sons of God. With what Manner of Love hast thou loved guilty Rebels, to

150 *A Family Prayer for the Lord's-Day Morning.*

make them Friends and Favourites; even Heirs of Heaven, and joint Heirs with Christ!

O that our Souls could with greater Thankfulness magnify the Lord, and our Spirits rejoice in God our Saviour! Thou art to be revered in the Assemblies of thy Saints, and to be honoured of all that are about thee. A Day in thy Courts is better than a Thousand; we had rather be Door-Keepers in the House of God, than dwell in the Palaces of Wickedness. When we lived as without thee in the World, thou didst pity us, and make thy Word and Worship effectual, as some of us have Reason to hope, for our Conversion and Regeneration. How freely didst thou pardon us! How graciously didst thou shew Mercy to us, and overcome our Hearts with thy Love! What a blessed Change hath thy Spirit wrought in our Minds! How many Preservations and Comforts hast thou afforded us! How many Afflictions hast thou moderated and sanctified! What delightful Communion have we had with thee in secret, and in social Worship! How precious are thy Thoughts unto us, O God! How great is the Sum of them! Thou, who hast given us Grace, wilt give us Glory too. These Foretastes of Love assure us, that we shall be happy with thee for ever. Our Hope in thy Mercy, thy Son, thy Covenant, will not make us ashamed. O how far will the Praises of the everlasting Sabbath excel these feeble Services! Quicken, Lord, our Desires after that blessed Day. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, that we may behold thy Glory.

While Sabbaths on Earth are continued, Lord, make them a Blessing to our Souls. Assist us in all the religious Services of this holy Day. Let thy gracious Presence go with us to the solemn Assembly. Help us against our manifold Infirmities, and the Sins that most easily beset us in our Attendance upon thee. Let thy Word be as good Seed in our Hearts, taking Root there, and bringing forth Fruit to thy Glory and our eternal Salvation. Let our Prayers and Praises be spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable in thy Sight through Jesus Christ. This

A Family Prayer for the Lord's-Day Morning. 151

This Day ride forth in the Chariot of thy everlasting Gospel conquering and to conquer. Let Heathen and Infidel-Nations be brought to acknowledge their Creator and Redeemer. In all thy Churches let the Arm of the Lord be revealed, Sinners be converted, and Saints be edified in their most holy Faith. Continue the Gospel in our own Land, and give it more abundant Success. Bless the King, and all in Authority, with Wisdom and Holiness, and zealous Concern for the Honour of God and the Advancement of real Religion. Make the Ministers of the Gospel faithful to Christ and Souls, as those that must give an Account, that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief.

Heal the Sick; ease the Pained; succour the Tempted; supply the Necessitous; be a Father to the Fatherless, and a Husband to the Widow in thy holy Habitation. Where Afflictions shall detain any from the publick Solemnities of this thy holy Day, let them enjoy thy gracious Presence in their own Dwellings. Fit the Dying for a glorious Sabbath above. Compleat the Number of thy Elect, and hasten thy heavenly Kingdom.

Blessed be God, that we are in Health and Comfort, to engage in the Duties, and enjoy the Privileges of this Sabbath. Leave us not to barren Hearts and wandering Thoughts and Affections. But let our Conversation be in Heaven, from whence we look for our glorious Redeemer, whom having not seen, we love, in whom though now we see him not, yet believing, may we rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory. For his Sake we beseech thee to hear us, O thou, *Our Father, which art in Heaven, &c.*

A Family Prayer for the Lord's-Day Evening.

BLESSED and glorious Majesty, we desire humbly to adore thee, as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and through him as

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our reconciled God and Father. We have none in Heaven but thee, and there is Nothing upon Earth we desire beside thee. Thy Favour is Life, and thy Loving Kindness is better than Life. Thou hast given us all Things richly to enjoy, pertaining both to Life and Godliness. Every Day hast thou loaded us with thy Benefits. This thy holy Day has been especially blessed to our Souls. Thou has taught us the Knowledge of thyself and of thy dear Son, whom to know is Life eternal. Thou hast set before us Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing, Good and Evil, that we might fly from the Wrath to come, and secure the Blessings of thy People. Thou hast shewed us the Evil of Sin, the Danger of an unconverted State, and the Riches of pardoning Grace and Love. Thou hast invited us by thy precious Promises, and hast opened to our View the Glories of thy heavenly Kingdom. Holiness has in some Degree, appeared to us in its Beauty, Sin in its Deformity, Christ in his All-sufficiency to save, and thy Holy Spirit in his gracious Influences to renew our Natures, and fit us for a perfect Sabbath at thy right Hand.

Adored be thine infinite Mercy, that any of us have experienced thy recovering Grace! Thou hast plucked us as Brands out of the Burning. Thy pardoning Love hath delivered us from Guilt and Condemnation. Our Souls have found a Refuge from thine eternal Wrath. To us thy Promises are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Satan, the World, and Death are overcome for us. O Death! Where is thy Sting? O Grave! Where is thy Victory? Because Christ lives, we shall live also. Because our Head is glorified, we shall be glorified with him. Once we were dead in Sin, but are now quickened to spiritual Life. Long were we in Ignorance and Unbelief, but are now Light in the Lord. Too long were we carnal, sold under Sin, but the Holy Spirit hath renewed us in the Law of our Mind. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly

heavenly Things in Christ. O that every Soul of us, not one excepted, may bear for itself a joyful Part in these Thanksgivings and Praises!

And why, Lord, are we regenerated and sanctified, but to love, and praise, and serve thee? We beseech thee, therefore, to perfect our weak and languid Graces. Make us more holy and heavenly, and bring us nearer to thyself in Faith and Love, that we may rise higher in thy Praises.

Lord, pardon the Sins of our holy Things. Sprinkle our Persons and Services with the all-atoning Blood of Jesus. Mortify our Pride, and clothe us with Humility, that when we have done all our Duties, we may account ourselves unprofitable Servants. Make us meek and patient, serious and sober-minded. Give us Grace to keep under our Body, and bring it into Subjection, that we may possess our Vessels in Sanctification and Honour. Let the Love of the World be rooted out of our Hearts, and shed abroad thy Love there by the Holy Spirit given unto us. Mortify in us all Envy, Hatred, Malice, and Uncharitableness, and help us to love all Men, and especially our Fellow-Christians with a pure Heart fervently. What we know not, teach us, and wherein we have done Iniquity, help us to do so no more. Fix our Affections on Things above, and let Time and the Things of Time be as Nothing to us compared with eternal Glory. Fit us for every Thing between this and the Grave; even for every Service or Suffering, every Temptation and Conflict. In all Conditions and Relations may we glorify thee, keep a good Conscience, and welcome thy whole Will with a lively Hope and holy Joy in thy Salvation by Jesus Christ. When we come to die, may we have clear Evidences for Heaven, finish our Course with Joy, and an Entrance be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

Accomplish, we beseech thee, thy gracious Promises concerning the Glory of thy Churches in the

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latter Days. Bring in the Fulness of the Gentiles, and let all Israel be saved. Destroy Antichrist by the Breath of thy Mouth, and by the Brightness of thine Appearing. Let the Kingdom of Christ be exalted on the Ruins of Satan's Kingdom. Send forth thy Light and Truth to heal the Nations, and turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Sin to the Love of Holiness. Let these Lands, and the Colonies thereto belonging, enjoy the Gospel in its Efficacy on our Hearts and Lives. Be very gracious to our Sovereign Lord the King, and every Branch of the royal Family; protect his Person, prolong his Life, sanctify his Heart, direct his Counsels, and prosper his Reign. Make our Nobility, Judges, and Magistrates eminent Blessings to the Nation. Let the Ministers of the Gospel be faithful and successful in their great Work. Follow with thy special Blessing what they have been doing this thy Day, that it may appear in the Conviction, Conversion, Sanctification and Salvation of many Souls.

Establish our civil and religious Liberties; lengthen our Peace and Tranquility; favour us with fruitful Seasons and the Plenty of all good Things; bless our Provision, and satisfy our Poor with Bread. Prosper our Trade, smile on the Work of our Hands; yea, the Work of our Hands establish thou it.

Graciously afford us every Personal and Family Blessing. Take us under thy Protection this Night. Be with us in all our Ways through the following Week. Help us to carry with us into every Day, into every Duty and Occurrence, the holy Temper and Sentiments of thy Day. May we by this Sabbath be brought nearer to, and be made fitter for, a glorious eternal Sabbath. Having joyfully remembered our Lord's Resurrection, may we more ardently look for and hasten to his last Coming, and our own Appearance with him in Glory. In him may we be found and accepted, both living and dying, and to him, with thyself, O Father, and the Spirit of Grace and Consolation, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Praise, for ever and ever. *Amen.* *The*

The Prayer of an awakened Sinner.

O God! How awful art thou in thy Holiness and Justice! Yet thou art gracious and ready to receive every penitent and believing Sinner. Here am I, prostrate before thee, in Hope of thy pardoning and saving Mercy. I hear of Jesus Christ, and of his Merits, Mediation and Intercession. I am taught the Necessity of Repentance, and of being converted and born again, and that without Holiness none shall see thy Face. I am convinced, Lord, of thy Right to me, and to all the Love and Obedience of my Heart and Life, because thou art my Creator and Benefactor. I am convinced thy Laws are holy, just and good. I am convinced of the Sinfulness of Sin, the Vileness of my Heart, the Abominations of my Life, the Vanity of this World; and that thou only art fit to be the Portion and Happiness of my Soul. I see there is no Hope for me, but in sincere Return to thee by Repentance, and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I fear lest the Hardness of my Heart, and the Power of Unbelief, and of worldly Lusts, should prevail against all my Convictions. Oh that I had a Heart to love thee above all the World, and to delight in thy holy Ways, more than in all the Pleasures of Sin! Oh that I had a Heart to believe in Christ, and to live by Faith, and not by Sight! I have corrupted this Heart, but I cannot renew it. I have defiled it, but I cannot cleanse it. I have kindled in it the Fire of Lust, but I cannot quench it. I have undone myself, rejected my Saviour, and resisted the Holy Spirit, and is there Mercy yet for me?

Have Mercy upon me, O God! according to the Multitude of thy tender Mercies. I have sinned, like a frail and foolish Man, but do thou have Mercy on me, as a gracious God. My Sin hath abounded, let thy Grace much more abound. Christ with infinite Expence hath redeemed Souls; and that revives my Hope. Create in me a clean Heart, O

God! and renew a right Spirit within me. Turn this Heart of Stone into a new and tender Heart. Fill this presumptuous Heart with a necessary Care for my own Salvation. I see my Duty, and have not a Heart to do it. I see my Danger, and run upon it. I foresee Death and Judgment, without flying to Christ, and redeeming my precious Moments. My Work is undone, my Soul is unready, and if I die this Night, where shall I awake? Thy Mercy hath long kept me out of Hell. Thou, living God, who didst raise Jesus Christ from the Dead, revive and raise me from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness, as thou hast done for Millions of Sinners.

Lord, heal this evil Heart of Unbelief, which hath slighted Christ, and departed from the living God. Thou hast left me a Promise of entering into heavenly Rest, but leave me not to fall short of it by Unbelief. Touch this Heart with a deep Sense of thy Love. Kindle in it this heavenly Fire. Let the Spirit of Love fix my Soul on the wonderful Love of Christ, on Christ crucified, on an ascended, glorified, and interceding Saviour, till I am all Love to him that died for me. Thou hast promised to give thy Holy Spirit to them that ask it. Deny me not the Grace which thou hast bid me ask, nor the Holiness which is thy Delight, and without which I shall continue thine Enemy to my Destruction. Thou hast sworn, that thou hast no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that he turn and live. Let thy Mercy spare me. Let thy Grace be effectual for my spiritual and eternal Life. Let me live the Life of Grace here, that I may live the Life of Glory for ever. Look from my Guilt and Misery to the Merits, Mediation and Intercession of my living Redeemer. Hoping and trusting only in his precious Name, I smite upon my Breast, and cry, *God be merciful to me a Sinner.* Amen and Amen.

The Prayer of a true Penitent.

O THOU God of all Grace and Mercy! Tho' thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, yet pity a miserable Sinner, and look upon me thro' the Mediation of thy dear Son. Had I better answered the Design of my Creation and Redemption, I might now have come to thee with the Boldness and Confidence of a Child, assured of thy Love and Favour. But I have too long been forgetting the God that made me, the Saviour that redeemed me, and the Business for which I was sent into the World. I have made my Reason a Slave to my Lusts, and have lived like the Brutes that perish. O the precious Time I have lost! O the gracious Calls I have neglected, and the manifold Mercies I have abused! I am ashamed to look back on the Years I have spent. What Trifles have enticed me from my God? Like *Esau*, I have profanely sold my Birth-right for one Morsel. To please my Fancy, my Appetite, my Lust, I have set light by all the Joys of Heaven. I have resisted the Holy Spirit, stifled my Conscience, grieved my best Friends, and become a Shame and Burthen to myself.

But, O my God! be not thou a Terror to me. Thou knowest my secret Sins, and all their Aggravations. My Sins have found me out; my Fears and Sorrows overwhelm me. If I look behind me, my Wickedness pursues my Soul. If I look before me, I see thy Judgment, and know thou wilt not acquit the Guilty. If I look within me, there is a defiled Heart. If I look without me, there is a World of Temptations to deceive and destroy me. If I look above me, I see thine offended Majesty. If I look beneath me, I see the Place of endless Torment. I fear to live, and am more afraid to die.

Yet I have Hope, when I look to thine infinite Mercy, to thy dear Son, and the Covenant of thy Grace. O God! be merciful to me a Sinner. I plead the
Sacrifice

Sacrifice and Merits of thy Son, and the Promises of Forgiveness through him. I condemn myself; but do not thou condemn me. Thou hast opened a Fountain for Sin and for Uncleanneſs, there let me waſh me thoroughly from mine Iniquity, and cleanſe me from my Sin. Soften this rocky Heart, and give me Repentance unto Life. Turn me to thyſelf, O God of my Salvation! and cauſe thy Face to ſhine upon me. Meet not a returning Prodigal in thy deſerved Wrath, but with thy Bowels of Compaſſion. Caſt me not away from thy Preſence, nor Sentence me to depart from thee with the Workers of Iniquity. Are there not Multitudes in Heaven who were once thine Enemies? Let thy Mercy be glorified alſo in my Forgiveness and Salvation.

I aſk not for Liberty to Sin again, but Deliverance from every ſinful Inclination. Give me the Renewing of thy Holy Spirit; even a new and divine Nature, that I may be Holineſs to the Lord. Enlighten me with the ſaving Knowledge of thyſelf and thy Son Jeſus Chriſt. Fill me with thy Love, that my Heart may wholly delight in thee. Let thy Kingdom and Glory, thy Word and Ways, be my ſweeteſt Meditation. Let my Treasure be in Heaven, and there let me daily conſeſs. Put thy Fear into my Heart, that I may never depart from thee. Let this World be crucified to me, and I to it, by the Croſs of Chriſt. Enable me to walk, not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit. Keep me from walking any more in the Counſel of the Ungodly, or ſtanding in the Way of Sinners, or ſitting in the Seat of the Scornful. Bleſs me with the Communion of thy Saints, and with all other Means for my Sanctification and Salvation. Never may I return to Folly, or forget the Covenant of my God. Help me by thy Spirit to quench the firſt Motions to Sin, and ſo fortify me againſt all Temptations, that I may be more than a Conqueror. Prepare me for Sufferings and Death, that I may yield my departing Soul into the faithful Hands of my Redeemer.

I beseech thee, by thy Word and Spirit, to convince and convert unconverted Sinners, and turn them from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God; that they also may receive the Forgiveness of their Sins, and Inheritance among them that are sanctified, by Faith which is in Christ Jesus. In him let me be found and accepted, both living and dying; and to him, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting Praises. *Amen.*

The Prayer of Parents for their Children.

O GOD! Thou art our God, and we will seek thee; our Father's God, and we will exalt thee; and we beseech thee to be our Children's God. Thy good Providence hath built us up into a Family, and we blefs thee for the Fruit of the Womb. But we lament the depraved Nature in which our Offspring share with us, and all the Streams of Sin and Folly which flow from so corrupt a Fountain. We have solemnly taken Hold of thy Covenant, both for ourselves, and our dear Children. Lord, they are thine, save them. Save them from Sin, and Satan, and this evil World: Save them from the Vanity of Childhood and Youth; incline their Hearts to Holiness, and give them the Wisdom which is from above. Pour thy Spirit upon our Seed, and thy Blessing upon our Offspring, that they may be a Seed to serve thee, which shall be accounted to the Lord for a Generation.

Teach and enable us to bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, and to instruct and guide, reprove and exhort them, in the Meekness of Wisdom, and as those who travel in Birth again to see Christ formed in their Souls. Let none of our's come short of eternal Life, or be found on Christ's left Hand at the great Day. Let it be the Joy of our Hearts to see them walking in the Truth, and setting their Faces Heaven-ward. We

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We ask not great Things for them belonging to this World. So far as shall be for their spiritual and eternal Good, favour them with Health and Safety, give them Direction and Blessing in every honest Employment, and feed them with Food convenient for them. Especially make them wise for their Souls and Eternity.

If it should please thee to remove any of them from us by Death, while they are young, make us humbly submissive and resigned, and firmly persuaded that All is well. If, while they are young, thou shouldst remove us from them, be thou infinitely better to them, than we were capable of being, for with thee the Fatherless findeth Mercy. And when we are gone to praise thee in Heaven, let our dear Children be praising thee on Earth, and be living, not to themselves, but to him that died for them and rose again.

Lord, thou knowest our Care and Concern, and we desire to cast it upon thee. Let serious Godliness in our Family make our Dwelling a House of God, and a Nursery for Christ and Glory. Let our Children do more and better Service for thee in their Day, than we have done in ours. And before the Tribunal of Christ may we joyfully say, Here are we, and the Children thou gavest us. Then may Parents and Children find Mercy, and enter together into the Joy of our Lord. Grant us this rich Grace, for the Sake of thy dear and only begotten Son, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, be Kingdom, Power and Glory, for ever. *Amen.*

A Morning Prayer for a young Person.

MOST high and holy God, the Creator, Governor and Judge of all Mankind. I desire to adore thy Majesty, and worship thee with humble Reverence. Thou art infinitely above my highest Thoughts

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Thoughts and Praises. To thy Mercy I owe the Repose and Safety of the Night, and that I see the Morning with Comfort.

I am unworthy to come into thy Presence. By Nature and Practice I am unholy and unclean. My Iniquities have rendered me viler than the Beasts that perish. I deserve thy eternal Displeasure. Lord, have Mercy upon me, for the Sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for perishing Sinners. In his precious Blood let all my crimson Sins be made white as Wool and Snow. Let me grow daily in an humble Acquaintance with Christ Jesus, as my Righteousness and Strength. Work in my Heart sincere Repentance and Faith, that I may love God, be fruitful in Holiness, be delivered from Sin and Hell, and be brought safe to thy heavenly Kingdom.

Form my Soul, O Lord! after thy holy Image. Sanctify my Thoughts and Inclinations, my Appetites and Passions. Give me a Christ-like Meekness and Humility. Help me to love all Men, especially all that love Christ. Guard me from youthful Lusts, and let no Iniquity get the Victory over me. Preserve me from the Defilements of the Age and Place where I dwell. Suffer me not to be led away by evil Companions, nor be ashamed of serious Godliness.

Continue this Day my Health and every Enjoyment, so far as thou seest good for me. Enable me to improve every Hour, and fulfill all my Duties to God and Man, that in the Evening my Reflections may be comfortable. Whenever I am afflicted, let it be in Mercy, to take away my Sin, and make me Partaker of thy Holiness. I desire to be thine in Life and Death, and thro' all Eternity.

Pour down thy Blessings on all Men. Give thy Gospel to Heathen Nations. Let Truth and Liberty, Righteousness and Peace, dwell in every Land, and the Kings of the whole Earth bring their Power and Glory to support true Religion. Let the Crown sit long and easy on the Heads of our Protestant King and Queen, and enrich them and their royal Family
with

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with the choicest of thy Favours. Let all inferior Rulers have Wisdom and Grace to make them Blessings to this Kingdom. Make the Ministers of thy Word wise to win Souls, faithful, and abundantly successful. Grant every Gift of Providence and Grace to my dear Relations and Friends.

Let the Prayers of a worthless Creature come up before thee this Morning with Acceptance through the Intercession of thy beloved Son. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the Purchaser of all the Mercies I have, or hope for. In him I desire to trust, rejoice, and ever to be found; and to him, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all Honour, Glory and Praise, for evermore. *Amen.*

An Evening Prayer for a young Person.

GREAT and glorious, gracious and merciful God and Father in Christ. Look down from Heaven, the Habitation of thy Holiness, and take Notice of a weak and sinful Creature, worshiping this Evening at thy Footstool. Thou madest the Heavens and the Earth, and knowest all the Works of thy Hand. My secret Thoughts are naked to thine Eye. My Heart has too often forgot thee. The best of my Services are too imperfect to deserve thy Love, nor can all my Obedience merit the Pardon of one of my past Transgressions. Let my Crimes be washed away in the precious Blood of thy dear Son, and in him accept a worthless Sinner. Spare me according to the Multitude of thy tender Mercies, and let me not go down to the Grave in an unpardoned and unholy State. Lengthen out my Days, that I may secure my best Interest and my eternal Hope. Take out of my Heart every evil Thought, and subdue every sinful Inclination. Let thy blessed Spirit renew my Soul, and make me holy in Heart, and Lip, and Life. Give me Strength against the Assaults of

Temp-

Temptation, and under all the Frailties of Youth, that I may not offend my God, crucify afresh my Saviour, and make continual Work for bitter Repentance.

Chuse my Inheritance for me, O Lord, and make me content with the Disposals of thy Providence in this present Life. Let not my Heart idolize any Thing on Earth, but fix my Affections on Things above, where Christ is at thy Right-Hand. Bear me up under all the Afflictions of Life with Faith and Patience. Make me stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, trusting thy gracious Promise, that I shall reap a joyful Harvest, if I faint not. Search, O God, and try my Heart, discover to me wherein I have wandered from thee; give me true Repentance, and lead me in the Paths of Holiness and Peace. Fit me for Death and Judgment, and train me up daily by thy Word and Ordinances, by thy Spirit and Grace, for the Business and Blessedness of thy Kingdom in Glory.

This Evening would I make a fresh Surrender of myself to thee for Time and Eternity. Protect me by thy Providence, and guard me by thy Grace thro' this Night, nor suffer any evil Imagination to defile or disquiet me. Whether I wake or sleep, live or die, let me be for ever thine.

Pity a lost World, that lies in Sin and Wickedness. Send thy Gospel among the Heathens, and Mahometans. Put an End to Popish Idolatry, Superstition and Tyranny. Recover thine ancient People the Jews, that they may believe in and love the Lord Jesus. Support and deliver those that are suffering for Christ and his Truth. Succeed the Gospel to the Conversion and Salvation of Souls. Make our King and Queen Instruments of Good to these Nations, and their Life and Reign long and happy. Counsel the King's Counsellors after thy Will, and teach our Senators the Wisdom from above. Let our Magistrates be Peace, and our Exactors Righteousness, and the Ministers of the Gospel burning and shining Lights. Unite to thyself in the Bonds of thy
Covenant

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Covenant all that are related to me in the Bonds of Nature, that they may share in eternal Blessings.

I praise thee, O my God, for Ease and Health, and all the Comforts of this Day and of my whole Life. Above all, I bless thee for Jesus Christ, to purchase Salvation for me by his most precious Blood; that I was born and brought up under the Sound of thy Gospel, and have been early acquainted with thy holy Word, wherein is all my Hope of everlasting Life and Glory. I beseech thee to perfume my unworthy Prayers and Praises with the much Incense of my Redeemer's Intercession, for he is most worthy. And in his Name and Words let me further call upon thee, as *Our Father, which art in Heaven, &c.*

The young Person's Prayer for Lord's-Day Morning.

HOLY, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! Thou art glorious in Holiness, fearful in Praises, a God doing Wonders. Wonders of Goodness and Mercy hast thou done for me, a sinful Creature, through my whole Life, and particularly the last Week. After so many Seasons of Grace, which I have misimproved, thou hast brought me to another Day of the Son of Man. Help me to remember the Resurrection of my Lord, and let my Heart rise to the Throne of his Glory. Banish from my Soul every vain Thought, that I may begin and spend this holy Day to thy Honour and my own Salvation.

Blessed be thy Name, O heavenly Father, who hast pitied a sinful World, and sent thy dear Son to die that we might live, and rise again that we might be justified. Blessed be Jesus, who took our Flesh and Blood, and by his Sufferings and Death, became a Reconciler of sinful Creatures to thine offended Majesty. Adored be divine Mercy, which sent a
glorious

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glorious Gospel to my native Land, and put into my Hands the sacred Volume, in which I read the Covenant of Grace, and learn the Way to everlasting Life.

Help me this Day to attend thy Word and the Ordinances of thy House with Pleasure and Profit. Let thy Ministers come to the Assemblies of thy People in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ, and particularly to my Soul. O that my Conscience may this Day be awakened, my Understanding enlightened, my Will bowed to the Obedience of Faith, my Affections fixed on heavenly Things, and my Heart enriched with divine Graces and Comforts! Make me fervent in Prayer, and joyful in Praise. Deliver me from a wandering Eye and Heart. Let not vain Thoughts lodge within me, or interrupt my humble Converse with thee. Let me love the Habitation of thy House, and the Place where thy Honour dwells, and at the Close of publick Worship may I find my Heart the fitter for devout Retirement.

Graciously accept this Morning Sacrifice for Jesus Sake, through the Virtue of his atoning Blood and prevailing Intercession. In the Evening let my own Experience joyfully testify, that a Day spent in Nearness to God, is better than a Thousand in sinful Pleasures. And while I am favoured with such Means of Grace, and Foretastes of Glory, may I look and long more ardently for the better Work and Worship of an infinitely better Sabbath at thy Right-Hand. Hear in Heaven, thy dwelling Place, and when thou hearest, forgive, and do for me and for all thine according to the Riches of thy Grace in the great Redeemer, to whom, with thyself, and the Holy Spirit, be endless Praises. *Amen.*

*The young Person's Prayer for Lord's-Day
Evening.*

ETERNAL Father! thou art the Author and Giver of every good and perfect Gift, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and in him the

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God of all Comfort and Consolation. What Grace and Mercy hath thou bestowed on a sinful Worm! Who and what am I, that the Lord of Glory should draw me nigh to himself! Why should I find a Place in thy House, and be numbered among thy Worshipers! How great is my Priviledge, to hear and read thy Word, to join with thy Saints in Prayer and Praise, and have the unsearchable Riches of Christ opened to my impoverished Soul! But, Lord, was there a single Worshipper more unworthy, more vain and trifling, more dull and lifeless, more wandering and distracted, than I have been? How little of thy Word has been treasured up in my Heart? How little have I relished the Truths of Christ, or felt the Power of his Grace and Love, or discovered the Evil of Sin and Beauty of Holiness?

Forgive, I beseech thee, the Iniquities of my holy Things, and sprinkle my Person and Services with the all-atoning Blood of Jesus. Though thy blessed Day be almost gone, let not the Work of it be altogether lost. O that I may retain the Sense and Savour of thy Word for many Days to come! Let the good Seed take Root in my Heart, and bring forth Fruits of Righteousness in my future Temper and Conversation. I desire to have more Love to thyself, and to Jesus the Son of thy Love, and more Love to my Neighbour for Jesus Sake. I desire to hate Sin more than ever, and be more watchful against every Temptation of Satan and the World, and more resolute to mortify every Corruption of my Heart. Let thy Grace be sufficient for me, and thy Strength be made perfect in my Weakness.

Blessed be God, who has not utterly forsaken his own Ordinances. I praise thee for some Breathings of Soul towards thee, some holy Exercises of Faith and Love, of Submission and Obedience, of Repentance and Self-Dedication; some Delight in thy Worship, both in the publick Assembly and in solemn Retirement. Carry on in me thy good Work, till it be finished in heavenly Joy and Praise in thy immediate Presence.

Pity

The young Person's Prayer for Lord's-Day Evening. 167

Pity the Multitudes that never had the Gospel, and let the Day-Spring from an High visit them. Pity those, also, who are groaning in Secret, because their Persecutors and Oppressors shut up the Doors of thy Sanctuary against them. Let Truth and Liberty, Grace and Peace, fill the whole Earth. Continue thy Blessings on our Rulers, who watch over our Civil and Religious Privileges. Heal and unite, edify and multiply the Churches of Christ, and take out of them every Thing that is contrary to the Truth as it is in Jesus. And prepare my Soul, by all the Seasons of Grace I am enjoying below, for the blessed Assembly of Saints and Angels in the Church triumphant above. Grant this, most merciful Father, for Christ's Sake, in whom I desire to trust, rejoice, and be ever found, and to whom, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, be all Honour, Glory and Praise, for ever. *Amen.*

The Prayer of one going to the Lord's-Table.

O THOU God of Ordinances! I thank thee for the Covenant of thy Grace, and the appointed Seals of it. I desire to give myself to thee, but fear I should approach to holy Things unworthily. Hast not thou filled me with Reverence for this Command of my dying Saviour, with this Desire of Communion with thee, and with this Willingness to be wholly thine? Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my Reins and my Heart. Am I indulging any secret Sin? Do I allow myself in the Neglect of any holy Precept? Let me not wrong my Soul, by a sinful Absence from thy Table. Let thy Word, Providence, and Spirit concur to make my Way plain before me. Scatter my Doubts. Give me stronger Faith and Love. O that the Views of a crucified Saviour may deeply impress my Mind, and a Sense of his dying Love constrain me, to give up myself to him more solemnly than I have ever yet done!

Lord

168 *The Prayer of one going to the Lord's-Table:*

Lord, shew me thy Covenant, and help me to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I believe; Lord, help thou mine Unbelief, and increase my Faith. Kindle my Repentance, and strike this rocky Heart, that it may bleed at the Remembrance of my past Follies, and confirm my Resolutions, that I may have Nothing more to do with Idols. I abhor myself, that I love my God, my Saviour, no better; let that Spark become a Flame; let that Flame be strong and steady, and the Proofs of it appear in my holy Obedience. O shed abroad thy Love in my Heart, by the Holy Spirit given unto me! Breathe upon this Clod, and it shall warm. Draw me, and I shall run after thee. I had rather love thee, than have all the Treasures on Earth. O my God, let me not be cold and lifeless at that Solemnity, where I am to commemorate the most glorious Love, that was ever known or heard of! Be with my Spirit, help mine Infirmities, accept me, and unite my Heart to thee in Covenant and everlasting Bonds, through my Redeemer. *Amen.*

The Prayer of one Sick, but unprepared to die.

MERCIFUL God! reject me not, while, in bodily Pain and Sorrow, and with Anguish of Mind for Sin and Guilt, I fly to thy Grace in Christ. Though I have trifled away the Day of my Salvation, say not, it is now too late. Thy Promises are large and free. Pity my Misery, and forgive my Iniquities, through the only Redeemer of lost Souls. If the Sufferings of my Flesh seem so grievous, how shall my Soul bear thy Wrath for ever? O give me Repentance unto Life! Let thy Spirit renew my Soul. Sanctify my Affliction, to take away my Sins, and to make me Partaker of thy Holiness. Lord, spare me a little, to make better Preparation for my great Change, before I go hence, and am seen no more. I dread to appear before thy Bar in an unpardoned and unholy State.

The Prayer of one Sick, but unprepared to die. 169

State. Renew my Days on Earth; and renew my Heart, that I may live to God and Christ, to Holiness and Heaven. I have abused thy Patience and Forbearance, lost my precious Time, and forfeited Life and Hope. I foresaw this Day, but I took not Warning. I am in Dread of my Sins, and of thy Justice and Holiness. O Eternity! Eternity!—Lord, try me once more with a Day of Grace. Cut not off my Time, till I am ready for Eternity. I condemn myself, but do not thou condemn me. Sanctify me by thy Spirit, wash me in thy Son's Blood, and give me such a Sight of Heaven by Faith and Hope, that I may willingly die, and come to thee. My Sin hath abounded, let thy Grace much more abound. Glorify thy Grace in Christ by my Pardon, Acceptance and eternal Life. Through the All-sufficient Saviour, let me be reconciled to thee, adopted into thy Family, and be made an Heir of Glory and a joint Heir with Jesus Christ. Whether I live, or die, I desire to be thine. To thee, O thou God and Father of Mercies, I give up myself; and O that I could with joyful Confidence call thee, my reconciled God and Father! Though I deserve Nothing else but to dwell for ever with Devils, yet fill me now with thy Grace and Love, and at Death receive me to thy Glory, that with Angels and Saints I may praise my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Prayer of a Christian near Death.

O THOU Sovereign of Life and Death, of Earth and Heaven! Thy Mercy brought me into the World, kept me from a thousand Dangers and gave me innumerable Blessings of Life and Godliness. Thy Mercy convinced and converted me, renewed and sanctified my Heart, and formed Christ in me. O amazing Mercy, that I am not dying in an impenitent

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170 *A Prayer for a Christian near Death.*

tent and Christless State! I thank thee for the Means of Grace, and the Hopes of Glory. I thank thee for the Fruits of Canaan through the Wilderness, and now on the Brink of Jordan. I thank thee for the Cordials of thy great and precious Promises, and that they are now as precious as ever. I covenanted with thee for eternal Life, as the Gift of thy free Grace, through Jesus Christ my Lord. In his Name I humbly claim it. To thine Hand I commit this departing Spirit. I am thine, save me. I have fled to thy Son's Cross. I have renounced all Dependence on any Worthiness of my own. I come to thee as a Sinner, believing in Christ for Pardon and Salvation. Let me have my Lot among the Followers of Jesus. I know in whom I have believed. I rejoice, that I am in the Hands of the good Shepherd. I thank thee, that, after this long Absence, thou art calling me Home, to the glorious eternal Home. But forsake not the World I am leaving, nor thy Church from which I am removing. Having bought it with an inestimable Price, still guard it, purify it, and unite it more and more, till all Flesh shall see thy Salvation. Let my few remaining Moments on Earth be spent for thy Glory. Whatever this Flesh may suffer, let my Soul be rising to the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, to the innumerable Company of Angels, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect. Let Faith be strong in the last Hour. Let me ascend in the Chariot of Love and Praise, and for ever sing the Song of *Moses* and the *Lamb*. Even so, come Lord Jesus, come surely, come quickly. *Amen.*

T H E E N D.





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